

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

The Glasgow Highlanders
9th. Bn. Highland Light Infantry
1914 -1918

by

Colonel A. K. Reid,
GB, CBE, DSO, MC, TD, DL.

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Chapter 1

MOBILIZATION

When Mr. Haldane formed the Territorial Force in 1908 out of the old volunteers, the conditions of service were altered; the principal change being that attendance at the annual training in camp was increased from eight to fifteen days and at the same time was made compulsory. This had the effect of keeping out of the force a great mass of good material, for many were unwilling to tie themselves down to attend camp every year, but it was undoubtedly a move in the right direction. Ten drills, a musketry course and fifteen days in camp each year were little enough training for war. It is true that Mr. Haldane's scheme envisaged a further period of six months embodied service before the force would take the field, but one doubted if such a long time would be available. The great flaw in the scheme was that the Territorials were enlisted for home service only, but after all, this disadvantage was more apparent than real for if the necessity of sending the force overseas ever arose, the great bulk of the officers and men could be counted on to volunteer, if not for their own personal credit then for the honour of their unit.

It was in its organization that the Territorial Force showed its most marked superiority over the volunteers. The older force was a collection of units. It had grown by the efforts of the local patriots who had permission from the War office to raise here a battalion, there a battery, with little regard for the proper proportion of the different arms or essential services, and even the units themselves varied greatly in establishment. Under the new dispensation, the establishments were brought into line, brigades and divisions were formed complete with staffs, supply and transport, medical and other services. The organization was therefore identical to that of the Regular Army, but when later the regular battalions were put on a four company basis, the Territorials retained their eight companies — it was suggested to save the small extra expense of four company commanders' chargers.

In Scotland the force was composed of two divisions, the Highland and the Lowland, with certain troops outside these formations; The Glasgow Highlanders belonged to the Highland Light Infantry Brigade of the Lowland Division. General Egerton, who later became Colonel of the Highland Light Infantry, commanded the Division and Colonel P.W. Hendry who had taken the 2nd Volunteer Company of the H.L.I. to the South African War and in 1905-1906 commanded the Glasgow Highlanders, was brigadier. Our commanding officer was Lt. Col. C. C. Murray who had also served in South Africa as a Captain in the Imperial Yeomanry.

In July 1914 when the 9th (G.H.) H.L.I. — the Glasgow Highlanders — went into camp at Gales for the usual annual training of fifteen days no one had the least idea that we were beginning, our final preparation for war. The Sarajevo murder was already a matter of history, but who then suspected what history it would make? The situation, it is true, appeared to be serious enough, but on more than one occasion since the Boer War the diplomatic sky had been as dark and the cloud had blown over. As a general rule one has little inclination at camp — and less time — for reading newspapers. At Gales, events in the Hundred Acre Field have more immediate interest than talk in the House of Commons, but in 1914, the perspective had changed. The news we now read in the papers day by day was of vital interest and its import added to the significance of our work, for we soon began to realize that the great European War, which we had so often thought about and talked about, and at which our civilian friends had so often scoffed, was going to happen after all.

The great events that were taking place, the hopes and fears that were shaking all the countries in Europe had little outward effect on routine at Gales. No doubt most of us, as we carried out attacks on the Dundonald Hills or practised night outposts on Shewalton Moss, wondered now we would feel if real bullets and shells were flying about or if a real enemy might at any minute appear out of the darkness. Of course we had thought about these things often enough, but now they were getting nearer. But if we wondered how we would stand the test as individuals, none of us doubted that the Battalion would come through it all right. We knew that we were not very highly trained as

compared with regular troops, but we believed that we had good material in the G.H. which would not be found wanting. Inspecting officers seemed to have a high opinion of the battalion, so why should we not agree with them? Whatever grounds we may have had for our faith, it is certainly a fact that the morale of the battalion was high.

We had read and had listened to lectures by staff-officers about what modern war on a grand scale would be like, and about the part the British Army might be expected to play in a European War. The one thing that was really clear was that the British Regular Army was so small compared with the huge conscript armies of the continent that it could scarcely be expected to play any part at all until the territorials came up alongside it, but we had implicit faith that man for man and unit for unit it was greatly superior to any other in the world.

Meanwhile as it became more and more obvious that Germany and Austria-Hungary were determined to force war on their neighbours we wondered what Great Britain would do. All the world knew that our Government did not want war, but we preferred war to the dishonour of our country and we knew that if we had to fight it would not be as aggressors. As we saw it the only vestige of blame, which could be imputed to our country, was not its love of war but its only too obvious love of peace. The 'Peace at any price' sentiments of some members of our Government in 1914 and the attitude of Mr. Lloyd George and a large part of the Liberal Party during the South African War were in themselves factors against peace: Germany may well have counted on our rulers practising what they preached.

Before camp came to an end and while the issue still hung in the balance, Colonel Murray asked for volunteers for active service overseas in the event of the battalion being required. The response was so satisfactory that the commanding officer was able to offer the battalion for immediate active service whenever and wherever it was wanted.

When camp broke up on the morning of Friday 1st August everyone already had the 'short leave' feeling, for it seemed only a matter of days or hours till the order 'Mobilize', would flash through the country. In order to ensure a flying start if the order did come, all officers and colour sergeants had been asked to leave their addresses during the weekend. On Saturday 2nd August they were recalled to Glasgow by wire, and that afternoon the preliminary work of mobilization was commenced unofficially. Colonel Murray knew that in asking this sacrifice of what might well turn out to be a last weekend at home, he was not asking more than would be willingly given. The saving of these few hours might have meant much, as it allowed us to get ahead of the mobilization time-table, and the battalion was ready to move when it was called upon before the mobilization period had expired.

On Monday 4th August, when the expected order to mobilize arrived, the work was already well under way, and everything was ready for the men who all joined up promptly. With them came hundreds of old Highlanders anxious to re-join, and crowds of civilians wanting to be enlisted. The battalion could easily have been expanded to a brigade, but lacking authority to recruit much over establishment, we could only take a few of the best. The others went away, some to join other units, others to wait till authority was given to raise our own second and third line battalions.

At Greendyke Street accommodation was both limited and inconvenient, so arrangements were made to billet two companies in the People's Palace on Glasgow Green where the men slept in comparative comfort under the palm trees. In addition, those who lived within easy distance of the drill hall were allowed to sleep at home. The officers, some of whom had been living in St. Enoch's Station Hotel during the week-end slept in the small and badly ventilated company orderly-room, but a few went home or remained at the hotel as headquarters was over-crowded.

These were busy days, and nights. Countless forms had to be filled up, details of equipment issued and mobilization bounties paid. Each man got five pounds for reporting with serviceable personal clothing etc., and any deficiencies could be made up from the quartermaster's store on payment. Ammunition was drawn from Maryhill and brought back under escort. Lieut. Hewat, battalion transport officer, had a busy time buying horses.

The advantage of our flying start was evident when during the night of 8th August the battalion was ordered to be ready to move at short notice. "The wind was up" — at least that is how in later days we would have described the apparent state of mind of higher authority. The telephone

rang, orderlies ran, bicycles and taxis dashed through the empty streets collecting outlying officers and men. Incidentally, the problem of paying for these taxis was not solved for many days. The companies fell in and ammunition was issued. The Germans had landed on the East coast — nothing less could possibly account for such a sudden and hurried departure. Before Glasgow was awake the battalion had entrained at Queen Street and was proceeding to an unknown — and very secret — destination. News of the move had naturally got round and a small crowd had collected in George Square. The general expectation was that, the G.H. would be in action by lunchtime. It turned out however that our dramatic departure was only an early example of staff humour, and that the enemy was no nearer than the other side of the North Sea or German Ocean, with the British Navy in between.

The secret destination turned out to be Dunfermline; occupied already by two regular battalions with whom we were brigaded. If any of us had visions of going overseas at once in a regular brigade, they faded away a few days later when orders came for the departure of the regular battalions. They entrained at night at the goods station, which was lit up with flares. The men were in high spirits, the chief subject of their mirth being their recent inoculation, from which they were all suffering more or less. The scene was a memorable one to those of us who went to give them a send off, and when the trains had steamed away, we returned to our quarters wondering when our turn would come to follow them.

Meanwhile our own brigade had arrived and we were again in under Brigadier-General Hendry's command battalion was quartered in the Carnegie Institute, a fine building just out of the builders' hands. Although the accommodation was infinitely better than Greendyke Street, the rooms were badly over-crowded. At night, the entire floor space was required for sleeping and the same rooms were used during the day for messing. There was almost no furniture in the building and the floor was found to be a poor substitute for tables and chairs. Even the gallery round the swimming pond was used as a barrack room. Later on additional billets were allotted to the battalion but even from the first, we considered ourselves lucky for the Institute was clean and airy and the baths were a priceless asset.

War at home was a very serious matter in 1914 and was not allowed to forget it. More than one night's sleep was lost through alarms, occasionally genuine but more often for training purposes. On these occasions the battalion would fall in ready to move, remaining on parade till dismissed, but once or twice it moved out of the town with transport fully loaded following.

The spy scare was at its height. The battalion duty found a number of guards for various important points such as the Post Office and Gas Works in addition to Brigade Headquarters. One night one of our sentries put a bullet through a revolving chimney can on the roof of the Post Office, mistaking it for a disguised German waiter cutting the telegraph wires.

The sentry of the battalion quarter guard had a beat along the front of the Institute. Among his orders was one to the effect that after dark he was to allow no one to use the pavement which ran along below the windows of the barrack rooms. The underlying idea may have been that an evilly disposed person could easily have thrown a bomb among the sleepers within. This may or may not have been a sound idea, but that did not concern the sentry. One night the sentry challenged a man who approached him along the pavement and told him to use the pavement on the other side of the road. The man turned out to be a policeman, who perhaps naturally wanted to argue the point, but the sentry was firm: his orders were clear and he was determined to obey them to the letter, as all good sentries do. The policeman not being able to get past the sentry's bayonet, retired. However, the majesty of the law had, to be vindicated, so he returned shortly afterwards with 'his mate'. The enemy having been reinforced and showing signs of an aggressive spirit, the sentry called up his reserves, the quarter guard. The Sergeant of the guard explained to the policemen that the sentry had only been carrying out his orders that for tonight they had better take the other pavement and that if they thought it worthwhile they could report the matter, in which case the orders would possibly be altered. The police insisted on their right to use the pavement there and then, and proceeded to do so by advancing on the bayonets of the guard with the natural result that they soon found themselves under arrest in the guardroom.

The situation had now become so serious that reference was made to higher authority, which

shortly appeared in the form of the Orderly Officer and the Adjutant on the one hand, and an inspector of police on the other. After a heated debate, the police retired in good order, but whether or not the police used the disputed pavement is not on record.

This little ado about nothing had no effect on the good terms we were on with the civil authorities of Dunfermline. We gave them no trouble, crime being practically non-existent in the battalion. The people of the town and neighbourhood were extraordinarily kind and hospitable. We were not in a position to do much in return, but the music we gave them in their parks seemed to be appreciated by the large crowds of townspeople who attended.

Although at Gailes the great majority of the Glasgow Highlanders had volunteered for overseas, the proceedings had been unofficial and it was necessary to have the matter put in proper form. A full parade was ordered and the Colonel asked again for volunteers. Major John Menzies, Second in Command and Captain Acklom, Adjutant, also addressed the men, the necessary forms were then issued to companies and signed by all the officers and almost all the N.C.O.'s and men.

Training meanwhile was going on at full pressure. In the mornings companies usually did physical drill or went for a run, the forenoons were devoted to company training, varied now and then by battalion schemes or route marches with full packs and equipment. These exercises often lasted till late in the afternoon. The work as far as possible was on progressive lines, but it was difficult to frame a programme, as no one had any idea of how much time would be available before the battalion was ordered overseas, Sergeant Major Lewis and the staff instructors had little difficulty in knocking the recruits into shape. The R.S.M. was a Scots Guardsman and looked it, but in the matter of inches, some of the squads ran him very close. His opinion was that they were the finest lot that he had ever trained, so it was not long before they joined their companies.

Scarlet tunics and white belts were now things of the past nevertheless as much care as ever was taken over the turnout of the battalion and particularly of its guards and pickets. The Sergeant Major loved to parade a guard or town picket of six-footers. It was rumoured that his partiality for smart duties was taken advantage of on one occasion. The story goes that some of the lads of A Company, having spent the evening playing billiards, or otherwise passing the time in one of the hotels, found themselves out of the barracks and deficient of late passes shortly after 'lights out'. As the Sergeant Major was about to turn in, he heard a steady tramp in front of the guardroom. "Town picket — halt! Right — turn! Left — dress ... May I dismiss the picket, Sir? Town picket, dismiss!" And so to bed, the Sergeant Major forgetting for the moment that no picket had been detailed that evening.

During the Territorial manoeuvres of 1911, the Lowland Division had fought a two days' action in torrents of rain against a force which was supposed to have landed in Fife with the intention of destroying the naval base at Rosyth. The line that had been held on that occasion was now to be constructed.

The battalion had marched into this area and, after spending a night in bivouacs was about to return to Dunfermline, when orders were received that two companies would remain and would commence digging trenches. The companies detailed for this duty, A and D, took up their quarters in Balbie and North Glassmount Farm respectively. The Balbie position was the identical line held by the Glasgow Highlanders in 1911. Shortly afterwards two other companies were sent to Lochgelly to extend the line further inland. During September, the recruits went to Linlithgow to go through a musketry course. They were followed by A Company, the intention being to send all the companies in succession.

Nearly three months had now passed and great deeds had been done by our little army in France. The original plans of the French had miscarried. Utterly surprised by the vast numbers Germany had put into the fighting line in the West, and by the strength of the enemy's great sweeps through Belgium, our allies had narrowly escaped from the disaster of being completely outflanked. The British Expeditionary Force on the exposed left of the allied line had beaten off greatly superior numbers of Germans at Mons and Le Cateau, but left in the air by the forced withdrawal of the French 5th Army, it had made its historic retreat. Sir John French's troops had done their part in the victory of the Marne and helped to drive the enemy back to the Aisne. Then followed the race to the sea, and now the first seven divisions were fighting the epic battle of Ypres. Already one or two

Territorial battalions had been sent to France. We wondered when our turn would come, and were confident that it would not be delayed much longer.

On October 31st, orders were received that the battalion would be held in immediate readiness to proceed overseas. There then followed a period reminiscent of mobilization. A Company was recalled from Linlithgow. The transport section went off to Deptford for re-equipment. A considerable number of our men were under age, others failed to pass the final medical test, many had been given commissions in our second line and other units, and finally those who had not volunteered for active service had not been replaced there was therefore a serious shortage in our numbers.

On November 2nd, we learned that the battalion would entrain that evening for Southampton, and that, to complete us to establishment, three hundred and twenty men would join us from the Second Line which was still training on Glasgow Green. A batch of them reached Dunfermline before the battalion left, and the remainder was to be picked up as we passed through Edinburgh. These men got only a few hours' notice; they had been living in their homes without any expectation of a sudden call to active service: they were neither clothed nor equipped, nor had they been inoculated. There was no difficulty in making up the draft so many volunteered, but that they were able to go at all speaks volumes for the efficiency of Colonel Fleming's staff.

Those who came to Dunfermline were given the equipment taken from the man who remained at home, and this added greatly to the inevitable stress of work, which had to be done at the last moment. The battalion owes these second-line men a debt of gratitude for the way they came forward, but there was something very far wrong with staff work which left the provision of this reinforcement to the last moment. However, all difficulties were surmounted; join us they did, and though not fully equipped and badly 'put upon'; they were as fine a draft as any unit could wish for.

Our Dunfermline friends gave us an enthusiastic send-off and we travelled south by two trains, arriving at Southampton shortly before mid-day on the 3rd. During the journey conjecture was rife as to our destination. We knew that the situation at Ypres was critical. Were we being hurried to the assistance of our 'contemptible' little army, or were we going further afield? Would we be brigaded with regulars or with other Territorials? Rumour had it that a brigade was to be formed of the London Scottish, the Liverpool Scottish, a battalion of the Black Watch, and ourselves.

At Southampton we marched to a rest camp in what had once been a park, but was now a sea of mud. Here we picked up the transport section and completed the equipment of the draft. On the morning of November 4th the battalion marched down to the docks, but before embarking halted at a depot where every man exchanged his long rifle and short bayonet for a short rifle and long bayonet. "A soldier should know his rifle, care for it and regard it as his best friend" it was thoughtful of the authorities to give us this opportunity of making so many new friends on the eve of our departure.

We were all aboard by half past two in the afternoon, but our troopship S.S. 'Novia' did not sail till, after dark. As the ship glided out into the open sea, guided it almost seemed, by the searchlights ashore, we realized that at last we were embarked on the great adventure: and among all the conflicting thoughts which were bound to be passing through the minds of all of us, it is safe to say that the predominating one was pride that the Glasgow Highlanders had been chosen among the first Territorial battalions to go on active service.

CHAPTER 2

FRANCE AND FLANDERS 1914

When dawn broke, we found that the good ship 'Novia' was one of a convoy steaming in V formation, and heading for the shores of France. The sea was a dead calm and overhead the sky was cloudless. Away on the horizon, we could just make out the destroyers of our escort.

At nine o'clock in the morning, we landed at Le Havre. As soon as the disembarkation was complete, the battalion, 30 officers and 1008 other ranks strong, formed up and marched to a rest camp on the high ground behind the town. Cheers broke out from the multitude as the column swung along the streets to the music of the pipes. The day was very warm, more like July than November, and although the distance to camp was not great, the way led up a long, steep hill. Marching with full kits and blankets, we were thankful when at last we arrived. Many would fain have rested, but it was not to be, for an inspection was ordered for the afternoon.

Dinners were hurried on, and in due course, the battalion fell in. The Inspecting Officer took infinite pains to see that each man was in possession of all those odds and ends, which go to make up a complete kit. He went away quite satisfied, but his method of ordering a company to turn out kits with another standing a few paces behind, made things very easy for the N.C.O's.

Maps were issued, not on a very generous scale but in great variety. These afforded no clue to our immediate destination except that it was apparently neither Egypt nor India. They covered nearly the whole battlefield from the Somme to the sea, and would have been of use either in an advance to the Rhine or a retreat to the Channel ports. Company commanders were given sufficient maps to fill a pack, and it was difficult to decide which should be carried and which stowed away in valises.

From the remarks of the general who inspected us, it appeared that we might be going into action immediately, so a midnight order that the battalion would march to the railway station to be ready to entrain at eight o'clock next morning was not unexpected. We were up betimes, and after breakfast additional ammunition was issued and rifles inspected to see that they were clear of mineral jelly, we marched down into the town, arrived at the station just before eight, and eventually got away fairly promptly at half-past twelve.

The battalion entrained complete with transport in an extraordinarily long train largely composed of those well-known trucks marked 40 Hommes, 8 Chevaux'. We then proceeded to meander round the country in a leisurely fashion; Mr. Cook might have been there in person to ensure that we should see as much of France as possible. It was a beautiful orchard country that we passed through and quantities of apples were given to us by kindly French lassies at the various places, and they were many, where the train came to a standstill. Others threw apples into the trucks and carriages as the train passed their homes. In exchange, pennies and chocolate were thrown to them, and a tin or two of bully beef.

The first place of note that we passed was Rouen, after that most of us lost our bearings altogether. Night found us still advancing by easy stages. Where we had got to it was impossible to say, but during the night, we heard firing, and it did not seem very far off. Eventually, after twenty-four hours in the train we reached our detraining point, St. Omer, Sir John French's headquarters.

A staff officer directed us to our billeting area at Wardreques, a little village nearby. Our quarters consisted of a tile and paper factory with a chateau, so called, attached, and three or four small cottages filled with straw. 'A' Company was lucky enough to get the cottages and was fairly snug, but the large factory which the rest of the battalion occupied was very cold and draughty and altogether undesirable, especially as winter came suddenly upon us with cold wind, storms of sleet and snow, and frost.

Meanwhile, the Battle of Ypres was still raging, but the first seven divisions were holding

their own. The Highlanders now formed part of a small general reserve at G.H.Q., and took a hand in constructing a reserve line, which could be held in the event of the Ypres position having to be abandoned. In addition to this digging, we put in a lot of hard training, which consisted largely of attacks over beet fields covered with snow. The kilt was not an ideal garment for this sort of exercise.

Little news came our way beyond the somewhat belated information we got from the newspapers from home. Every night the eastern sky was lit up with flashes, and we heard the continual thunder of the guns. We were held ready to move at short notice, but the battle was won without the reserve being required. "They also serve who stand and wait."

While we were waiting at Wardreques, the Army and Empire suffered a great loss in the death of Lord Roberts while on a visit to G.H.Q. A party of Highlanders went to the funeral service to pay a last tribute to grand old soldier whose words of wisdom had fallen on deaf ears of his countrymen.

At length the period of inaction came to an end: we started for the trenches. Toughened by work and hard training, the battalion did the nine miles to Hazebrouck in great form, and arrived just as it was getting dark. Rain was falling, the town was full of troops, and the lights of the 'estaminets' reflected in the puddles on the cobbled streets lit up a scene of great animation. Refreshments, liquid and otherwise, were difficult to get, and our commissariat had not yet reached a state of efficiency, particularly as regards the officers' mess. However, after waiting till we were really hungry, the mess president put up a most excellent meal in an 'estaminet', to which, needless to say, full justice was done.

The following morning saw the battalion on the road again. Hard frost had followed the rain and the road was ice-bound. As we marched up the hill into Bailleul, the road was lined with Jocks of the 2nd H.L.I. who greeted us warmly. We had been posted to the 5th Brigade, to which the 2nd H.L.I. belonged, and no arrangement could have pleased us better. Some of them were not quite prepared to see us in the Black Watch kilt, but that did not prevent the firm friendship, which sprang up between the two battalions. The remaining battalions in the brigade were the 2nd Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and the 2nd Worcestershire Regiment, with whom we were also soon on very friendly terms. The 2nd Connaught Rangers had left the Brigade to join the Ferozepore (Indian) Brigade, so the G.H. did not become a fifth, or extra, battalion in the brigade, but at once took over a full share of front line duties.

Brigadier-General R.C.B. Haking, CB, whose book on company training we had used, commanded the 5th Brigade, which belonged to the 2nd Division under Major-General C.C. Munro, CB. On the night, we arrived our brigadier visited battalion headquarters and had all the officers introduced to him. He welcomed us to France and to his brigade. He told us that we were going into the trenches the following night. Part of the Highlanders would be in the front hue and the remainder in support and reserve. He explained that a reserve was a luxury that he had had to do without lately and that our arrival had doubled the strength of his command. He was confident that his new battalion would be a credit to itself and to the brigade, and assured us that in his opinion we were more than equal to any Germans we might come up against. Our trenches might or might not be attacked, but if they were, he was quite certain that we would hold them. The quiet confidence of his words and his personality made a great impression on us.

The section of the line, which the 5th Brigade was to take over, lay along the low ground east of the village of Kemmel, which was prettily situated in front of the hill of that name. In the afternoon of the 25th November, the brigade marched out of Bailleul, the Glasgow Highlanders bringing up the rear. Before very long we were out of France and on Belgium soil — or rather on Belgium cobbles. After marching along a straight main road with great trees on each side, we took a series of by-roads, and, passing to the north of Kemmel Hill were descending a steepish gradient into the village just as the light was beginning to fail. Suddenly we heard "whiz - bang," then another and another. We were under shellfire for the first time. Evidently, the enemy was shelling the road 'on spec', but although some came fairly close, none of the shells did us any damage. While this was going on a halt was called from the head of the column, which by this time had reached the village, and word was passed along for company- commanders. A conference was held at the village, where the Brigadier issued orders for taking over the trenches.

The relief was complicated by our battalion being still organized as eight companies. A Company with half of B attached took over the front line; the remainders of B, C and D Companies were in support, while the left half-battalion formed the brigade reserve — General Haking's unusual luxury.

It was dark when the column got on the move again, and with the darkness came an increase in the rifle fire. Passing through the half-ruined village, A Company picked up a guide at brigade headquarters, and proceeded in file across country to the front line. The firing was now heavy, but it was of course un-aimed, and did not harm anyone; although it was a little trying to the nerves till one got accustomed to it,

The take-over was a simple matter, there were no Communication trenches, and no trench stores except one or two rifle grenades. Our fire trench was not continuous, degenerating into a series of holes on the left, where, beyond a gap of about sixty yards, lay the 2nd H.L.I.

The Highlanders lay down behind, while the 2nd H.L.I. filed out of the trench. As each section was cleared out, men got up quietly and moved in, each looking back to see that the next was following, as we had often practised at night operations. One Jock, observing that a form lying beside him did not get up, pulled his arm and whispered, "Come on," The form did not move, it was stiff and cold; a dead Frenchman. The position had originally been held by French cavalry, and a large number of their dead lay unburied.

The Germans' front line was on higher ground about two hundred yards away, except at one point where a salient in our line brought us to within fifty yards of it. There was no wire, but part of our trench had been dug behind a thin hedge, which perhaps gave one a feeling of security.

Just a few days had passed since the end of the Battle of Ypres and neither aide knew what the other would do. Sniping was continuous and every now and then there would be a fierce burst of rapid fire, If this was a sign of nervousness it was comforting to observe that the enemy's state was very much worse than ours, for he simply blazed away into the darkness. At times, his guns were active also, while our artillery only fired one or two rounds all night for the very good reason that they had no ammunition to spare.

Before dawn the company 'stood to'; gradually the sound of firing died away till at last there was almost perfect silence. Behind could be seen the beautiful wooded slopes of Mont Kemmel. Somewhere there our guns were in position; those guns which could only afford to fire a few rounds each day. In front the Germans occupied the lower slopes of the Messines-Wytschaete ridge. From their points of vantage they were able to enfilade us from two directions because of the salient in our lines; this was a serious matter owing to the lack of traverses in our trench. Little could be done in daylight to correct this, but by keeping well down at the exposed places we managed to avoid casualties.

Throughout the forenoon the enemy's guns treated us to a regular bombardment. Crump after crump came over and landed between the front trench and the line of holes occupied by the support a few hundred yards in rear. At first, the sensation was unpleasant, especially when shells landed just behind the parapets and scattered earth over the occupants of the trench, but soon one realized how small a target a trench is, for during the forty-eight hours there was not a single direct hit.

The garrison of the front line carried two days rations, but all the water available was what was left in the water bottles, which had been filled in Bailleul. During the cold night, this had been in great demand to make soup from the various brands of tablets of which there was a plentiful supply. More had been required on the morning for washing and shaving, so during the day there was a great scarcity, and the supply could not be replenished until dark.

The second night passed under very much the same conditions as the first. One was not, however, so much inclined to imagine that the tree stumps in front were German, nor to think that each time the enemy opened rapid fire it was the prelude to an attack. (There were no Very pistols and eyes straining in the dark are very apt to see imaginary movement.) More attention could therefore be concentrated on improving the trench by building traverses and connecting up the holes on the left. There were neither sandbags nor picks and shovels, but much could be done with entrenching tools and goodwill. Accordingly, the trench was considered safer the second day than it had been during the first. This day also passed quietly except for the enemy's heavy but ineffective shell-fire,

and, some rifle grenades, which he shot at us with equal lack of execution.

On the night of 27th/28th, the Highlanders were relieved by the Liverpool Scottish, old acquaintances who had camped with us at Gales a year or two before. As soon as it was dark guides were sent back and in due course the sound of the relief squelching through the mud — the hard ground having thawed — could be heard. As before, the relief was carried out quickly and without casualties, despite fairly heavy rifle fire.

Meanwhile the supports and reserve had handed over, and just as the battalion had formed up ready to move off, we suffered our first casualty, Lieut. A.J. Cowie being hit by a stray bullet and rather severely wounded.

The march back to Bailleul was rather an effort, especially for the men from the front line who had had little sleep during the last two nights. However, Lieutenant and Quartermaster Clark had not forgotten us, and before going very far we found the cooks in a field just off the road, going full blast brewing tea. That the tea was infused to an inky blackness mattered little. It and a liberal ration of rum worked wonders; the cobbles seemed to fly past, and before daylight we were marching along the streets of sleeping Bailleul. Each company went back to its old billets and it did not take long for all ranks to 'get down to it'.

Chapter 3

Winter 1914 — 1915

After its spell in the line at Kemmel the 5th Brigade went into reserve at Bailleul. The three regular battalions were sadly reduced in strength. Drafts from home arrived, and the time was spent in refitting and retraining.

A welcome variation of our routine was afforded by the visit of the King, who, accompanied by the Prince of Wales, Sir John French, and a number of army chiefs, reviewed the 2nd Division. All the fields being waterlogged, the parade ground was the Bailleul-Meteren Road, along which the Division was drawn up under a leaden sky to await the King. When Colonel Hurray was presented, His Majesty told him that he remembered well seeing the Highlanders during his last visit to Glasgow, and congratulated him on his battalion getting on active service so soon.

The Glasgow Highlanders had to make one important adjustment to the conditions of modern war. Previously it had been part of our faith that shoes were the only wear with the kilt: they were more comfortable for marching, and spats fitted more neatly over them than over boots. Unfortunately, they had not stood the test of Flanders' mud at Kemmel, so there was nothing for it but to pocket our pride, and parade in boots and puttees.

From time to time we heard rumours of a contemplated British offensive through Belgium; then we learned that our positions round Givenchy were being attacked. On December 15th we were ordered to be ready to move on short notice, and, till we actually did move ten days later, we were almost continually standing by, sometimes with wagons loaded. Uncertainty like this rather cramps one's style, both for training and recreation, consequently we were all heartily glad when definite move orders came in.

The battalion paraded at midnight; buses were ready, and before long we were thumping and bumping over the cobbles. Sleep, of course, was out of the question, and it was bitterly cold. The general direction of the journey was south. In due course the ungainly procession halted, and we tumbled out, trying to increase our circulation, and feeling that it was about breakfast time. Snow was falling, and already the ground was white. All round was very flat country relieved by rows of willows marking the roads and ditches, in which the sluggish water looked black in contrast to the snow. It appeared that the name of the small scattered village we had reached was Locon, and that our billets were a few broken-down barns belonging to the farms round about. These were allotted to companies, and soon breakfast was being prepared.

Locon, about three miles north-east of Bethune, lay behind the area where the Indian Division had been beating back the German attacks. The 1st H.L.I. belonged to the Indian Division and our late adjutant, Captain Barry Baird, was reported missing. The fighting had been of a desperate character, and it was only too probable that he had been killed. While he had been with us, he had been unsparing in his efforts to make the G.H. as efficient as possible. His loss was a great blow to us all, and we felt sure that he would have been proud to meet in France the battalion, which he had done so much to help to get there.

The 2nd Division had taken over from the Indians with the 4th (Guards) Brigade and the 6th Brigade in the line and the 5th in reserve. The fighting had died down except for occasional bursts of activity, one of which took place the day after we reached Locon, when the 2nd Grenadier Guards lost heavily in successfully repelling an attack. The trenches were reported to be in a deplorable condition. Our somewhat draughty quarters were palaces compared with them, and we were fortunate in being able to enjoy a very festive Christmas, thanks to our many friends at home, both public and private, who sent out large quantities of seasonable fare. Princess Mary's chocolate boxes were distributed, care being taken that not a single man should be left out.

On Christmas day, which was observed as a holiday, General Munro came to see us. It was his last day as our divisional commander; his place was taken by Major-General H.S. Horne. At the

same time, we lost Brigadier-General Haking, who took over the 1st Division. Our new Brigade Commander was Brigadier-General A. A. Chichester.

On December 27th the 5th Brigade took over the line east of Richebourg-St.Vaast. For the next two days, the Glasgow Highlanders were in brigade reserve, billeted in Richebourg close to the trenches. Many of the inhabitants of the village, which had been considerably knocked about, had left so we had plenty of room and very comfortable quarters.

The earliest trench-mortar batteries were being formed at this time and we were called upon to contribute our share of the personnel required. There is a temptation on such an occasion for a battalion-commander to send those officers and N.C.O.'s that he can most easily spare. Colonel Murray in this case created a precedent, which the Glasgow Highlanders always tried to live up to: he selected the best he had. 2nd Lieut. McCosh went in command of our small detachment, and he had with him Sergeant Sandy Wingate of A Company. The T.M.B. men joined their primitive gas-pipe battery at once, and for many days the battalion saw them no more.

On the evening of December 29th, the battalion went into the front line. That afternoon fur jerkins had been issued and in these picturesque garments, with fur of various colours on the outside, the Highlanders looked prehistoric. Our sector ran parallel to the Rue du Bois; the main road from Bethune to Neuve Chapelle, which village at this time was in the enemy's possession. The front line was roughly five hundred yards beyond the road facing south-east. The communication trenches started from the Hue du Bois, which was not a place where one cared to linger long, owing to the continuous shell and rifle fire, which swept it, especially at night.

Three companies, A, B and E, went into reserve in ruined farms behind the road, and the other five took over the trenches from the 2nd Oxforas, H being in support. A complete system of front, support, and communication trenches had been constructed, but these, owing to the wet weather were rapidly degenerating into ditches. The two C.T's. which served our front line were known as the 'Water Trench' and the 'Mud Trench', one having more water than mud and the other more mud than water.

The Germans were two hundred yards away. In two places ditches which, being continuations of our communication trenches, proved the origin of the latter, crossed no-man's land. The ditches were blocked about forty yards forward, where small sandbag redoubts loopholed for rifle fire were occupied by six or eight men who amused themselves in sniping, and being sniped at. In addition there were a few short saps, that is, listening posts for entry groups. In front of the parapet there were a few strands of trip wire, which however, had been badly cut by shell-fire, and was a sorry apology for an entanglement.

Although in many ways superior to those of Kemmel, the trenches had not reached a very advanced stage of evolution. The bottoms were simply mud without any attempt at flooring here and there the sides crumbled and fell in. A party of Royal Engineers gave us our first lesson in sandbag revetting, and gradually parapet and parados were patched up. This work went on continuously, the time being spent in spells of watching, working, and sleeping.

When a man came off duty he generally managed to stow himself away in one of the numerous excavations under the parapet, which previous occupants had scooped out. The parapet rather than the parados was chosen for these cubbyholes, as being the safer place to sleep when there was a chance of shrapnel fire. These excavations were continually falling in and strict orders were issued that parapets were not to be undercut. dug-outs were few in number and primitive in design, simply recesses in the back of the trench, often with a door from one of the houses of the Rue du Bois for a roof, On the top of which earth and sods were thrown. They were some protection from shrapnel, but of course none against high explosives.

The front line being in communication with the rear both by day and night simplified the business of supplies. Cooking, such as it was, however, was still done in the trenches. The diet consisted largely of bully beef and Maconnachie rations, the latter when properly heated being fairly popular at first but one soon got very tired of them.

The most precious ration, however, was rum. Thousands of men could not have stood the life in the trenches without it. After a tour of duty on a cold wet night when one was soaked to the skin, a good tot of rum was simply invaluable; it sent a glow through the body and made sleep possible.

On Hogmanay the support and reserve companies relieved the four in the front line. This relief was a slow process owing to the thick sticky mud, 'Mud Trench' being particularly bad. From the front line it ran back perfectly straight for a considerable way, and although there was a high traverse at the head of it, bullets grazing this enfiladed it rather badly. During the relief we lost a second officer, Captain M.C. Frame, wounded. This happened shortly before midnight and was the prelude to a regular 'blatter' of shell and rifle fire with which the Germans ushered in the New Year.

For a time it almost seemed that something really serious was coming, and we stood along the fire-step with fixed bayonets ready for eventualities, but the situation soon became normal again, and we were able to proceed to routine, having been treated to a very fine firework display at an enormous expense of German ammunition.

The 2nd H.L.I. relieved us on the night of 2nd/3rd January. The take over was again slow, for the mud, in spite of all our efforts to clear it, was thicker and stickier than ever.

Back in its old billets in Richebourg the battalion was reorganized on a four-company basis. This change should have been authorized long before we left Scotland. Our reliefs so far had been a nuisance to ourselves and everyone else. No sooner was this done than the battalion was again wanted for duty in the trenches.

On the night 5th/6th January we took over the sector immediately on the right of the one we had lately occupied, with Nos. 1 and 2 Companies in the front line and 5 and 4 in support billets. The mud was not now quite so much in evidence — because it was under water. The two companies were strung out with all four platoons and company headquarters in the firing line. Our right flank was rather in the air; at least there was a considerable gap between it and the left of the next brigade. The reason for this was obvious; the ground between was water-logged, and there were evidences of an attempt to dig across the gap. The line formed a slight re-entrant at this point and higher Authority thought that the solution might be found by digging out nearer the enemy.

Accordingly, the first night, No.1 Company, which was on the right, was ordered to undertake the work. With a covering party in front, two platoons began to dig. No time was wasted because there was some shell and intermittent rifle fire, but as soon as the trench got a foot or so deep it filled with water, which began to flow back into the old front line. Needless to say, the work was abandoned — we had enough water in our fire-trench already, without draining no-man's land into it. Unfortunately this operation cost us several men wounded, among whom one died in hospital, Private Stuart Brown of 'A' Company.

This tour in the line was only of three days' duration, as the 4th (Guards) Brigade were due to relieve the 5th Brigade at the end of that time. It was not therefore originally intended to carry out inter-company reliefs, but conditions in the trenches were so deplorable that after forty-eight hours Colonel Murray ordered a change over. The following night the 3rd Coldstream Guards took over our ditches, but they soon abandoned them and took up a drier line of defence along the Rue du Bois.

Our new billeting area was lea Choquaux, a little place between Locon and Bethune. The support companies marched, off independently soon after dark. No.1 Company leading found that great stretches of route were under water, and had to retrace its steps and find a drier way. Warning was sent back to the others, which was lucky for them, as the seven miles were quit enough for Nos.3 and 4 from the trenches. Their relief had been a very protracted one, as in the communication trenches the men had literally to pull each other out of the mud at almost every step. In one or two cases shovels were required to dig people out. Shortly after daylight the last company reached its billets.

The 5th Brigade was not in divisional reserve, and we remained at lea Choquaux for six days, during which we did a little training and a good deal of cleaning up. Then the Brigade went into the line again further south at Festubert, and the Highlanders moved to Essars for other six days in brigade reserve. This twelve days' rest was very enjoyable as we were quite near Bethune and could get back to civilization. The Hotel do France, where Madame 'George Robey' gave good lunches and dinners, was much patronised, as were the many estaminets, by all ranks.

On the afternoon of 20th January the G.H. moved off to relieve the 2nd Oxford in the right

sector of the brigade front. Passing through the village of Gorre we reached Marais, or the 'Tuning Fork' (so called from the appearance of the roads on the map) after nightfall. The road from here had once been a lane with a ditch on each side lined with willow trees. Marching troops had converted its surface into thick mud, and then sleepers had been laid across to give a firm surface, finally heavy rain had fallen on it, off and on, for weeks. When we struck it in the dark most of the sleepers were floating about at all angles: when stepped upon they sank, rolled over or tipped up. It was a most diverting place.

The brigade was holding the villages of Le Plantin and Festubert, the trenches having been abandoned; Le Plantin, which lay on the right nearest Givenchy being our position. Nos.2 and 3 Companies were in front with Nos. 1 and 4 in support about five hundred yards behind, all companies living in houses. The scheme of defence was much simplified by the flooded condition of the country. By night we had posts out in front, the principal ones being on two roads leading into the German position, the 'Yellow Road' and the 'White Road'. The post on the Yellow Road, which was in No.3 Company's area, was at The point where the old front line trench cut it, about 500 yards in front of the village and about 200 from the German fire-trench. The latter appeared to be certainly occupied by night, and probably by day as well, for we could observe smoke rising from it in the mornings.

The Yellow Road ran straight across no-man's land. It had a ditch and the usual trees at intervals along it. Each evening the garrison of the post, consisting of an N.C.O. and twelve men, was marched out by an officer. He had to judge the exact moment to set out: it had to be dark enough to enable him to walk along the road unseen by the enemy, but he could not delay too long lest a German patrol should get to the little sandbag barrier first and annihilate his party as it came along. That nightly walk was trying to the nerves, but there was always competition to get detailed for the 'Yellow Road' post. Once the barrier was reached the situation was more comfortable, for the flanks were protected to some extent by the old flooded trench, and patrols visited it at intervals. The most welcome visit was doubtless the officers' patrol, which brought hot tea and rum in the small hours of the morning. The voices of the Germans could be heard distinctly, and all around the frozen bodies of Gurkha and Germans were reminders of what had already happened there — and might happen again at any moment.

The two road posts were not intended to be held at all costs, but only long enough to give good warning to the outpost companies. Then the garrisons were to retire, get through a barbed wire barrier, which was covered by Lieut. Todd's machine guns and rejoin the garrison of the village line. This was being strengthened every night, large working parties from the support companies lending a hand Digging down was out of the question, but sandbag parapets were built along the orchard hedges.

On the whole, life at Le Plantin was luxurious. A respect for the enemy's guns enjoined very little movement by day, nor for the same reason was smoke permitted, but at night fires were allowed, provided that all windows and shell holes showing to the front were properly screened.

January 25th being the Kaiser's birthday, we were warned that some liveliness might be expected on our front in honour of the occasion. This was a pity, as we were planning to honour a greater man with such resources as were at our disposal. However, the enemy started early in the morning to shell our position. This was not the usual exhibition of materialised hate, but a regular hot bombardment. Fortunately he could not tell exactly where we were, and had to spread his shrapnel and H.E. over a large area. Even as it was, the ordeal was trying for the flimsy houses afforded no real cover, and No.2 Company had several killed and wounded. Among the killed was Lieut. Donald Galbraith, in whom the battalion lost an officer of great promise.

Meanwhile, on our right Givenchy was being heavily shelled. Situated on the extremity of the Aubers Ridge, it was on the only piece of, comparatively high ground we held north of the La Basse canal. If the Germans could push the 1st Division off the end of the ridge, Le Plantin, would be untenable, or at least costly to hold, and over the canal the Cuinchy brick stacks would be enfiladed, being on higher ground, the trenches round Givenchy were still occupied, and the position formed a salient which could easily be attacked as there was no flooding.

The O.C. No.3 Company had a cunningly contrived observation post. By standing on a table

in the attic of the House', company headquarters, and sticking his head through a shell hole in the roof, Captain Wingate, armed with a telescope, was keeping his weather eye on Givenchy. He could just see into the German trench on the bluff north-east of the village, and there he observed the Germans collecting. This crowding in a front line trench could only mean one thing, an assault. The place was some 1,200 yards away, it could not be seen from our firing line along the orchards, and clearly No. 3 Company could not bring any great volume of fire to bear through the hole in the roof of the butcher's house. He sent a message back to the guns. The gunners from their O.P. had also seen what was going on, but their telephone line had been cut by the shelling. However, one message was as good as another. At 9a.m. two things happened the Germans rushed forward from their trenches and our 18-pounder barrage fell on them. The watchers in the butcher's house had the satisfaction of seeing the effect for a moment, and then the smoke of the bursting shells obscured the scene.

During the forenoon fighting continued at Givenchy. To make our right more secure, and at the same time to be in a position to support the 3rd Brigade if necessary, Colonel Murray sent Captain Frew with No.4 Company to take up a position on the right of No.3. Lieut. McCosh, whose trench mortars were not for the time being in action, had reconnoitred the ground, and with his assistance as guide, Frew led his company forward in artillery formation. Ditches and old trenches made the advance difficult, a shrapnel barrage came down, but thanks to rapid movement the small compact columns got through unscathed and occupied the new position.

Before noon it was reported that the enemy had broken into Givenchy, but that the 3rd Brigade was preparing to counter-attack at once. The 2nd H.L.I. and 2nd Oxforas were moved to the right to support the attack, leaving Le Plantin and Festubert to the Glasgow Highlanders and 2nd Worcesters unsupported. There was no cause for anxiety, however, as the partial flooding in front made our line an easy one to hold. Heavy shelling continued and our companies in front had several killed and wounded.

The counter-attack on Givenchy was a complete success; the 3rd Brigade regained all the positions lost, taking some prisoners and inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. Towards evening the 'strafe' died down, and it was evident that the Kaiser was not to have Givenchy as a birthday present. That night Nos. 1 and 4 Companies relieved Nos.5 and 2 in the front line.

Except for spasmodic outbursts of fire the next few days were peaceful, although the right remained noisy, especially round Givenchy. We patrolled our front regularly by night and a walk in the dark among the flooded trenches was in itself an adventure, leaving out of account the possibility of meeting German. Orders came through that a patrol was to go out to find where, and in what strength, the enemy was holding his front line. Sergt. T. Gray of 'A' Company and two men were sent out on the night of 26th/27th January with orders to crawl to within listening distance of the German trenches. The three went down the Yellow Road, passed through the post at the barrier, and were lost in the darkness. Sergeant Gray bumped into a German post and was captured. His commission came through the same night.

Three nights later the Oxforas took over and the Highlanders went into support, occupying billets in the little village of Gorre with No. 1 Company in Marais, a collection of small farms on the southern prong of the 'Tuning Fork'. On the last day of January a draft of 149 men under Capt. A.H. Martin and Lieut. R. Carrick MacLelland joined from the 2nd Glasgow Highlanders. This was the first draft to reach us, but another officer, Lieut. Frank Donald had come before the end of the year. This brought the battalion up to strength again with most excellent material. About the same time the 5th Brigade had posted to it the 2nd Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, bringing it up to a strength of five battalions. The 'Skins' were a first-rate devil-may-care lot, and were soon very popular.

While at Gorre the Highlanders were in close support to the battalions in the front line, and in addition two companies went out each night to build a sand-bag breastwork a little way in front of the old flooded front line trench, and of course well beyond the village line which was now being held. From a defensive point of view it seemed rather a pity not to have such an excellent obstacle as the old ditch in front the breastworks, but we were already familiar with that blessed expression 'The Offensive Spirit', and obviously an obstacle to the Germans would also be one to us if we wished to visit them. If one may express an opinion, the idea carried out was wrong, because while

it is comparatively easy in front of one's own trench to negotiate a ditch by bridging, it, it is a very different story in front of an enemy's. However, ours not to reason why, ours but to go out every second night and dig in the offensive mud, and shovel it into sandbags, which were built up by the sappers of the 5th Field Coy. Royal Engineers, Splendid fellows these were, and they suffered a lot of casualties while the work was going on. The Germans could mark the progress of the breastwork each day and sight machine guns and fixed rifles on it to be fired at intervals during the night. Each night we had one or two killed and wounded; the work was very heavy, and we often sighed for the fleshpots of Le Plantin, still held as a front line five hundred yards behind us,

Chapter 4

HOLDING THE LINE

Meanwhile, our Division had taken over the Givenchy salient, which still held its reputation as not exactly a health resort. The 6th Brigade, which occupied it, was at this time only four battalions strong, and we were ordered to send a half battalion to reinforce it. Accordingly, Nos. 2 and 4 Companies under Major John Menzies proceeded to Givenchy and were attached to the 2nd South Staffords. A portion of the front line between the Canal and the 'Duck's Bill' was handed over to them, and this they held alternately on 24 hour relief's, the company in support occupying the Givenchy Brewery. Only two companies being left to complete the breastwork, the work went on more slowly, but the job was finished by the 18th, when the whole battalion went to assist in the defence of Givenchy.

Battalion headquarters and two companies went to Pont Tournant on the Canal, about four miles behind Givenchy. Each evening a company moved up and spent the night in Givenchy Brewery. The brewery was not such a hospitable place as the name might imply, but at least it was built solidly of brick and had a strong arched roof, which was comparatively shellproof against anything except heavies. The chimney, a favourite target for the German guns, was still standing more or less intact and was used by our gunners as an O.P. The neighbourhood seemed to be a sort of focus for the enemy rifle fire, and all night long, bullets from all directions slapped into the walls and whistled along the road.

After some hours of sleep — difficult to get owing to the cold — the company moved off to carry out the relief, which had to be completed in time to allow the relieved company to get back to the brewery before dawn. One platoon advanced along the canal, struck off to the left up the Willow Road, crossed several single plank bridges over flooded communication trenches, and striking across country took over the right of the front line. It was like a slow obstacle race in the dark, in which a slip might mean death. In one of the early reliefs we had a sad accident Sergt. Lang of No.4 Company stumbling in a shell-hole fell into the canal. With all his heavy kit and ammunition he sank at once and was drowned, despite every effort to save him. The two platoons for the left had an easier route round by the village, but one rather more exposed to shell-fire. The fourth platoon occupied Orchard Redoubt about five hundred yards behind the front line.

The relieved company after an early breakfast at the brewery marched back by platoons along the canal to Pont Tournant. Three nights later it again moved up to Givenchy. Thus by day three companies were at Battalion Headquarters and one at Givenchy, and by night two were in each place. Major John Menzies continued in command of the forward companies, having his headquarters with Colonel Routledge, O.C. South Staffords. For the South Staffords we soon had a sincere regard, and for their commanding officer admiration and affection.

The front line consisting of short lengths of breastworks were connected by detached posts, which were isolated by day. Shelling was fairly continuous and we had quite a number of casualties from this and from rifle fire. The lack of communication trenches made it impossible by day to evacuate the wounded, who had to be made as comfortable as possible till they could be taken back under cover of darkness. The enemy was two or three hundred yards away, except on the left, where the opposing lines approached to about fifty yards at Duck's Bill, some way beyond our flank except for the aforesaid shelling — and sniping, in which we were as much as, if not more than, he was to blame — the enemy left us to our own devices; we could concentrate on improving the parapet, constructing dug-outs and patching up the rather meagre wire in front. Orchard Redoubt, the support platoon's position, had the advantage of better dug-outs and the disadvantage of being more subject to shell-fire.

A gentleman in a Burberry appeared one day when the redoubt was occupied by No.1 Platoon. He began to criticise the defences and to offer suggestions for their improvement. Lieut. J.K.T. Glen did not see eye-to-eye with him and apparently thinking he was an engineer, preceded to teach him his business. After laying down the law in no uncertain fashion he found out that the individual he

was lecturing was none other than Brigadier-General Fanshaw, commanding the 6th Brigade. They parted friends.

The Germans attempted no repetition of the adventure of the Kaiser's birthday, but it was suspected that they were trying to do underground what they had failed to accomplish on the surface, and that a mine was being tunneled in Duck's Bill. As a counter-move a trench raid was planned, with the intention of destroying the mine and doing as much damage, physical and moral, to the enemy as possible.

The orders for the raid were very thorough. Two storming parties, each of one officer and twenty men, with supports, were to be detailed by the officers commanding 2nd South Staffords and the 1st Berks respectively. By special request Colonel Routledge included ten Glasgow Highlanders in his parties, which were on the right. The ten Highlanders were volunteers under Sergeant Port, all of No.4 Company, one of the two original Givenchy companies. The 1st East Anglian Field Company Royal Engineers supplied work parties with shovels and sandbags for blocking trenches, and a demolition party to attend to the alleged mine shaft. Artillery support was arranged, and our No.1 Company was in reserve at the brewery, No.4 being in front on the immediate right of the raid. Finally, zero hour was fixed for twenty minutes past five on the evening of 20th February.

The communication trenches leading to Duck's Bill, being on comparatively high ground were still practicable, but heavy rain during the day of the raid made them very wet and muddy. Short ladders were carried up and placed along the parapet of the fire-trench. In the afternoon, under a downpour of rain, the assault parties filed into the trenches. The Highlanders had discarded the kilt and went over in khaki aprons.

At five o'clock our bombardment commenced. At quarter past, heavy rifle fire was opened along the front on both sides of the objective to prevent the enemy from bringing crossfire to bear on the attack, No.4 Company doing its share on the right with the utmost goodwill. The artillery bombardment was very successful, several gaps being cut in the enemy's wire and some direct hits made on his trench. The light of the dull winter evening was rapidly failing and the smoke of the shells added to the obscurity. At twenty past five two storming parties dashed forward. Simultaneously the rifle-fire on the flanks increased in intensity to keep the Germans' heads down, but already the enemy's guns were replying. Before they were halfway across a shell burst among the right storming party, causing many casualties. Sergeant Port was wounded, but continued to cheer his men on and direct them as best he could from where he lay. Lieut. Harris, the gallant leader of the South Stafford supports, seeing what had happened, rushed forward with his men and fell mortally wounded just as he reached the trench. Englishmen and Scots jumped in together, driving before them the Germans who did not wait long to fight.

Meanwhile, the Berks had also reached the objective. A search was made for the mineshaft but none was found, and the object of the raid having been achieved the order to retire was given. The withdrawal was successfully carried out, supported by the flanking rifle-fire, and the whole operation was over by ten minutes to six. The casualties were: 1st Berk 11, 2nd South Staffords 8, and Glasgow Highlanders 5.

Needless to say, the raid did not improve the temper of the Germans, but their retaliation was confined to increased shelling during the remaining fortnight of our tour at Givenchy. On 5th March the last company was relieved and marched back to Bethune. That afternoon Major-General Horne inspected the battalion, He said that he was very pleased with the turnout after a trying spell in the front line which had, lasted since 29th January, and he congratulated us on our share on the Duck's Bill raid.

Meanwhile, the 5th Brigade had left the Festubert sector, and had taken over Cuinchy from the 4th (Guards) Brigade. The rest accorded to the G.H. lasted just 24 hours, for on the afternoon of 6th March the battalion left Bethune to rejoin the 5th Brigade. We marched along that broad cobbled way which, after winding through Beuvry, stretched, between lines of trees, perfectly straight to Annequin, then bending slightly towards the north through Cambrin and Burbure, ran in another straight line into the enemy's country and La Bassee. The main line of communication between Bethune and the trenches south of the canal, this road nearly always carried a heavy traffic particularly in the evenings when reliefs went up, presented a splendid target for the enemy's guns,

yet we were comparatively seldom shelled. From Beuvry onwards battalions went by platoons for greater safety.

Cuinchy, like Givenchy across the canal, was one of the storm centres of the 1st Army front. Several fierce little actions had been fought among the brick stacks by the Guards earlier in the year. As matters now stood, rather more than half of the stacks were in British hands. Some of these were incorporated into the defence scheme, Cuinchy Keep having one at each corner. Some had sniping posts hidden in them, and these were a source of sport and profit to snipers and scouts, dug-outs were constructed under them, which were unrivalled for comfort and safety. Sitting in one of these under a bombardment one was as safe as in Glasgow — provided the front line held. Cuinchy was the home of the mine, trench mortar, rifle-grenade, and bomb.

The Glasgow Highlanders, however, did not hold the front line during this spell, but occupied Cuinchy Support Point, a strong redoubt in an orchard in front of the ruined church, with three platoons and Braddell Post on the La Basse road with another. The remaining three companies occupied billets in Annequin ready to counter-attack if required. The forward company was relieved every four days. This arrangement was made in order to give all units in the brigade their fair share of the front line. We had had rather more than our share lately, and moreover, had come from Givenchy without having had any rest.

The Cuinchy trench system was a model one. The long communication trenches were paved with brick, of which there were abundant supplies from the stacks and smashed houses. The Guards had left evidence of their presence in the names of the trenches Old Kent Road, Oxford Street, Marylebone Road, Coldstream Lane, and many others. Hertford Street, the main C.T., ran from No.1 Harley Street — the dressing station — and took traffic both ways. We dug another, known as Glasgow Street, so as to have an up and a down trench. We were also responsible for all the trenches behind the support line and kept them free from mud and in tip-top condition, which involved a lot of work. In addition, mining fatigues were sent up to the front line.

Only one of the brigades of the 2nd Division, the 6th at Givenchy, took an active part in the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, but the 5th Brigade at Cuinchy, with the 4th (Guards) Brigade in support at le Preol, were held in readiness to go forward in the event of a break-through north of the canal. The transport was brought up from Beuvry, and one of the reserve companies occupied the Cambrin Support point. A special Order of the Day by Sir Douglas Haig was read by Company commanders on parade. At half-past seven in the morning the bombardment commenced. Nearly all the guns of the 2nd Division concentrated their fire to the north of the canal to assist the 6th Brigade's attack at ten minutes past eight. Rifle-fire was opened along the Cuinchy front to keep the Boche jumpy. Huge guns replied with spirit, shelling the area the Highlanders occupied among our batteries, but doing no great amount of damage. About zero hour fire increased all round. We waited anxiously for news. Our friends, the 2nd South Staffords, were attacking along with the 1st Kings and the 1st King's Royal Rifles. Eventually we heard that the attack had made no progress, the 6th Brigade being held up on the enemy's uncut wire.

The battle gradually died down and normal trench life was resumed all along the front. So ended in stalemate the First Army's first offensive of 1915. After Neuve Chapelle the weather improved and life at Annequin and Cuinchy Support Point was pleasant. The latter place was almost as comfortable as the billets, for the dug-outs, if not shellproof, were dry; one consisted of the body of a cab built into the parados with windows and door intact. Our machine guns, being brigaded, took their share in front line duties. Cuinchy was to the right of the British line, and Lieut. W. J. J. Coats as he sat in a dug-out beside one of his guns, could boast that he was literally the right-hand man of the British Army.

Time was found for games, and several Association and Rugby matches were played while shells whistled overhead and burst in the next field. Some French officers were interested spectators and challenged us to play their regiment at rugby. In due course the team from the two French battalions turned up. Our team was a fairly strong one, the backbone of the forwards being Glasgow Academicals led by Tom Burton of 'A' Company. Behind the scrum we had a Cambridge blue in Teddy McCosh and Charlie Andrew, ex-captain of the Academicals. We got an English Gunner officer to referee. The result was three tries to nothing, in our favour, the French playing with more

vigour than knowledge of the same. One particularly stout forward in corduroy breeches, hob-nailed boots and a beard, evoked equal admiration for the good-natured ferocity of his play and the unblushing way he continually picked up the ball in the scrum. An understanding had been come to with the referee that the Frenchmen were not to be penalized too strictly, otherwise we would never have got on with the game, and the whistling would have been too reminiscent of a noisy night among the ‘minnies’ [minenwerfer].

The 5th Brigade left Cuinchy on March 21st. The Highlanders marched back to Bethune and billeted in l'Ecole des Jeunes Filles. No jeunes fillies being in evidence, we returned next day to the trenches. The new sector was our old one at Festubert, but an extra half-battalion front had been added on the left, and this frontage two companies took over that night from the London Scottish, Headquarters, and the other two occupied billets in Marais.

In the front line No.2 Company held breastworks and detached ‘grouse which were rather draughty in cold weather. No.5 in support lived in two small farms behind a large brewery, which gave the name Brewery Post to the sub-sector. In place of communication trenches, canvas screens served to give an approach to the front line more or less covered from view, but these did not extend all the way, and one had to dodge about through the ruins of Dead Cow Farm to avoid becoming a casualty. In the farm we had a very good sniping post where marksmen could see behind parts of the Germans’ breastworks. Here quite a lot of good work was done with rifles fitted with telescopic sights, and the Bosche never seemed to find out where the sniping was coming from. The two companies relieved each other in the front line every forty-eight hours, and every eight days the reserve companies took over.

The German gunners were very much creatures of routine every forenoon they bombarded our brewery with heavies for an hour or so, starting at almost the same time each day bits of brick sometimes reached the flimsy farm buildings we were living in, but shells seldom came as far — and one shell might have knocked out a platoon. We soon learned not to go up to the front past the brewery during the forenoon, and considering our exposed position had very few casualties from shell-fire. The breastwork was not bulletproof in some places, but this was soon put right. We also constructed bombproof dug-outs behind the farms, but we never needed to use them — perhaps our successors found them useful.

The battalion remained at Brewery Post for thirty-three days, during which the weather gradually improved. Companies from a London Territorial Division (47th) were attached for tours of twenty-four hours training in trench warfare, and on April 24th they took over the line and the Highlanders marched back to billets in the Tobacco Factory, Bethune.

The almost summer weather we had been enjoying indicated an early renewal of active operations. All sorts of rumours were flying about; one joked about the ‘offensive spirit’ and wondered when and where the next ‘haroosh’ would take place — and how!

Chapter 5

THE BATTLE OF FESTUBERT

After three months of duty in the line, relaxation and somewhat limited pleasures of Bethune were very welcome. The eight days' rest, however, was not all beer and skittles, for a lot of training had to be done in bombing. Neither the 'jam tint' nor the 'Batty' were ideal weapons, but bombs of some kind were essential for trench warfare, and these were the only types of which there were good supplies. Bombing sections were trained. Bombers, bayonet men and carriers worked along trenches prepared for the purpose, the bombers throwing over the traverses and the bayonet men rushing round to complete the execution. It was dangerous work even at practice, but we had no accidents. Rumours of the coming offensive were thick in Bethune; the inhabitants seemed to know as much about what was going to happen as we did.

On the afternoon of 3rd May the Highlanders moved down the La Basse road again, one company took over Cuinchy Support Point, another Cambrin, the remainder going into billets at Annequin. After three quiet days the battalion was relieved and moved back to Bethune.

It was now quite evident that we were 'for it'. The 'Offensive Spirit' was in the very air we breathed, and jokes about it got on our nerves. Trench maps of the German lines were issued along with the latest intelligence reports, from which we marked on the maps the suspected position of machine guns, strong points and batteries, and noted the supposed depth and breadth of the many ditches. From the maps we inferred that the attack was to be on the Festubert-Richebourg front.

We looked forward to the battle with a good deal of confidence, in spite of the Neuve Chapelle failure, because we understood that the attack was going to be on a big scale with plenty of guns behind it. It would at least repay, with interest, the foul blow which the Germans had dealt us at Ypres, when on 22nd April they had used gas for the first time. We had heard of the tortures suffered by the Canadians and others, and this new weapon seemed infinitely more to be feared than the shelling we were accustomed to. Rumours had it that suspicious looking cylinders had been spotted opposite Richebourg. Well, if so, the sooner we were at the Boche the better.

Before long we were issued with respirators. They were very simple affairs, a pad of cotton wool encased in black gauze, with tapes for tying at the back of the head. Every third man carried lime-water in his water bottle for saturating the pad in the event of a gas attack. Whether there would have been time to do all this, and to what extent the respirator would be a protection, remained to be seen, but the moral effect of their issue was very great.

The general idea of the projected operations was for the French to attack the enemy salient between Arras and Loos; it was hoped that they would break through and force the enemy to retire. Two British attacks, one on a front of about three and a half miles from Givenchy to Richebourg and another further north at Rouges Bancs, had for their object the capture of the Aubers Ridge.

The 1st Corps attacking from the Rue du Bois and pivoting on Givenchy had orders to break the German front and advance on the line Rue du Marais - Illies. On its left the Indian Corps was also attacking. On our corps front the initial stages of the attack were in the hands of the 1st Division, the 2nd — less the 4th (Guards) Brigade at Cuinchy — being in reserve. It was stated that we greatly outnumbered the enemy in men, guns and shells.

The offensive originally planned for the 8th day, was postponed till the 9th. On the heavy fire could be heard, the greater volume coming from the French front on the south. That afternoon blankets were stored and greatcoats packed in the transport wagons.

That night no one went to bed in the ordinary sense of the term. Those who were able to snatch a little sleep were roused before midnight, and shortly afterwards the battalion was swinging down the streets of Bethune and along the bank of the La Basse Canal. The overture of the battle had commenced, guns boomed along the front and the eastern sky was lit with flashes of bursting shells. Crossing the canal at Gorre, we halted at the north end of Gorre Wood and bivouacked — we were at our station as part of the reserve. The rest of the 5th Brigade was in the vicinity, and the 6th

brigade lay some distance to the north.

For hours we waited, hearing no news, and wondering when orders to move forward would come. At about five o'clock in the afternoon the Brigadier informed commanding officers that the attack of the 1st Division had failed, and that the 2nd Division would probably be moved to Richebourg to make a night attack. We learned later that there had been three attacks, all of which had broken down with heavy loss.

After dark an order was received to advance, and at nine o'clock we were on the move. We plodded on in the darkness through one or two heavy showers of rain, frequent halts testifying to a certain amount of confusion in front.

It was wearying work, the halts we could scarcely sit down even, and everything was so wet and muddy. Richebourg was very heavily shelled, but as there were plenty of splinter-proof dug-outs round about, and as these had been carefully allotted, the platoons occupied them as soon as it was evident that the Boche meant business, and we had very few casualties. That night we were ordered to send 600 men, which meant practically the whole battalion, to dig two lines of shelter trenches behind the front line. One seemed to remember having read in some official publication that it was inadvisable to do this immediately before an attack as it gave away the intention to the enemy. However, as soon as it was dark the battalion marched by companies on to the tapes that had already been laid, and set to work. The Germans, of course 'had the wind up' and there was a good deal of shelling, but as the work was done silently, they did not know that 600 men were in the open in front of them, and consequently there was no concentration of fire on our area. The stretcher-bearers, however, were kept busy, but the work went steadily on, for the deeper the trench the safer the digger.

Next day orders were issued for an attack the following night, but again it was postponed. The battalion did another night's work on the shelter-trenches. The 14th was a comparatively quiet day, and that night we had a rest from digging, the shelter-trenches being completed. At last operation orders came in, finally fixing the attack for the same night. The receipt of the orders was a positive relief, we had been a full week waiting ready for action, but had done nothing but march and counter-march, and dig.

The 5th and 6th Brigades were to attack at 11.30 p.m. Simultaneously the Indian Corps on the left was to advance. The objective was the enemy's front line system that is his fire and support trenches.

The 5th Brigade order of attack from right to left was the Inniskillings and Worcesters in the front line, supported by the Oxfords and Glasgow Highlanders, the 2nd H.L.I. being in reserve. After the two leading battalions had taken the first objective, those in support were to carry on at 3.15 a.m. and complete the task of the brigade, namely, to make good the line of the Festubert-la Tourelle Road, an average distance of 700 yards from the present front line. The First Army's final objective was the line Violaines-Beau Puits, about 4,000 yards away.

Each position when won was to be consolidated against possible counter-attacks, and for this purpose three working parties of 50 men each were detailed from the Glasgows to assist the Worcesters. These were found by No.4 Company and were commanded by Capt. Martin, Lieut. A.G. Macnaughton and Lieut. W. Spens. They reported to the O.C. 2nd Worcesters at 5.50 in the afternoon.

The country was almost flat to the eye, but in reality it rose slightly towards the east. Everywhere it was intersected by ditches. The trees had been stripped bare by shell-fire. During our reconnaissance from the Rue du Bois, two points had called for particular attention. One was the German front line on the left of our brigade front. The map showed it to bend forward and thus to give a fire position enfilading no-man's land along our whole front. Such a position was sure to be full of machine guns. The other feature was the Ferme du Bois, situated a little beyond the enemy's second line and right in the centre of the brigade front. Our guns had reduced the farm to ruins, but nevertheless it might prove to be a strong point, beyond the Ferme du Bois was another large farm, it marked the right of the 6th Brigade's final objective, so its interest to us was not immediate.

Our battalion operation orders, which were quite simple, were fully explained to all ranks. The advance was to be on a two-company frontage, No. 1 (Major J. Ralston Bock) on the right,

No.2 (Capt George Wingate) on the left, No.5 (Capt. A.R. Menzies, who had just rejoined the battalion) being in support. Capt. Frew's company, which had been depleted by the detachment of the consolidation parties and was represented by a weak platoon, was in reserve.

At 8 o'clock in the evening the battalion marched out of Richebourg, crossed the Rue du Bois, and entered the communication trenches. Each of the front companies had its own C.T., and deployed to right and left along the shelter trench, with two platoons in each line. Each company before moving off had been arranged in such a way that, in the new alignment, platoons and sections got into their correct places automatically. No.3 Company occupied the old second line breastwork behind. Every man carried two days' rations and an extra bandolier of S.A.A.

The leading battalions were to be formed up in front of the parapet before zero hour. The reasons for this were, firstly, that the men would make a lot of noise climbing out in a hurry in the dark, and secondly, the different waves would be properly organized before they had to advance. Our orders provided for the occupation by us of the front line as soon as it was vacated by the Worcestershires, and for this purpose the two company headquarters on the communication trenches kept in close touch with what was going on in front.

The night was very dark, and there was no more than the usual amount of fire while we moved into position. At eleven o'clock Col. Murray and Capt. Acklom passed up into the front line. By this time the Worcesters were creeping out into no-man's land. The Germans from time to time put up flares. Now and then there were outbursts of machine gun fire, and as the minutes passed these got more frequent. The enemy may have seen something; whether they did or not, their fire caused the Worcesters a lot of casualties and delayed the forming up. At zero hour a great many of them were still in the breastwork.

According to plan, the leading platoons of the Highlanders should have been in the front breast-work at 11.30, but this being impracticable they remained in cramped positions in the narrow shelter-trench. Suddenly about a minute before the half-hour a number of flares went up from the German trenches, and almost at once a terrific fire was opened. Bullets streamed overhead, and a minute or two later the enemy's guns joined in and shelled our trenches and the Rue du Bois behind. It was quite evident that the attack had not been a surprise, but the Worcesters made a gallant effort to get forward. The Highlanders who were attached joined in the assault. On the right Lieut. Macnaughton led his men forward, he fell wounded, but his men went on with the Worcesters. It was no use, only a few got as far as the enemy's wire. In the centre there was no greater success — no one could cross no-man's land that night. Those who were not shot took refuge in shell-holes and crawled back later as best they could. On the left the bend forward in the enemy's line was full of machine guns. Capt. Martin with his party attempted to reach it. The fire here was even more deadly, and Martin was killed before he had gone twenty yards.

The attack had failed. By midnight most of the survivors were back in the front line. Here there was a good deal of confusion. The four companies of the Worcestershires were all mixed up, many of the men were wounded, and more wounded were still coming in. On the right the Inniskillings had captured the German front line, but on the left the Indian Corps had not been able to make any progress at all. Brigade ordered the Worcestershires to attack again, but that was clearly impossible, and the order was cancelled. At a quarter-to-three an order came from Brigade that the Glasgow Highlanders would attack in half an hour. This was even more impossible, the battalion was still in the cover trenches, and the front line was packed with the Worcesters. We could not get into it, and to have used the trenches we were in for jumping off places with such an obstacle in front would have been folly. Brigade was informed of the situation, and preliminary steps were taken to carry out the order. Col. Murray ordered Nos.1 and 2 Companies into the front line, crowded as it was, for it seemed hopeless to wait for the Worcesters to get clear. On the right No.1 Company filed up the communication trench, but the one on the left was so badly blocked that Capt. Wingate took his two leading platoons over the open. There was still a good deal of rifle fire, but the breast-work in front was some protection and the movement was carried out without loss. Having reached the front line the two company-commanders found that they could not organize the attack in time. The trench was so crowded that even runners could hardly get along with messages. Had it been attempted the assault would have been a ragged one, foredoomed to failure.

Fortunately, a message from Brigade cancelled the order in time to prevent disaster. We were however, to hold ourselves in readiness to assault at short notice by half-past four the Worcesters had all bone back, and we had the trench to ourselves

In the 3.15 attack the Inniskillings and Oxfords had captured a small portion of the enemy's second line; on their right, the 6th Brigade, which had taken both lines in its first attack, had made no further progress towards the second objective beyond them again the attack of the 7th Division had been successful, but on our left the Indians were still held up.

During the day further efforts to advance were made by the 6th Brigade and the 7th Division, but with little or no success. No forward move was made by the 5th Brigade. The guns on both sides were at it all day long, ours rather concentrating on the right, but the heavies bombarded the Ferme du Bois till it was enveloped in a cloud of brick-dust. When there was any movement on the right we opened rapid fire on the trenches opposite. The Germans replied with rifles and machine guns, but it was most difficult to spot where their fire came from meantime, we were having some casualties' from shell-fire. The communication trenches got their full share of this. The stretcher-bearers worked devotedly along them carrying back the wounded, till most of them were killed or wounded themselves. The regimental aid post was behind a house on the other side of the Rue du Bois and here Capt. Martyn worked continuously during the battle. The area was continually under fire, but the houses protected the post to some extent, and there were no direct hits.

Lieut. W. Spens was among time wounded. When the stretcher-bearers came to take him back to the dressing station he refused to be moved till another wounded man, who was lying near, had been taken away. The bearers obeyed his order, but before they got back for him he had been hit again and killed. Thus the battalion lost a very gallant officer.

As the day wore on our men got impatient they wanted to do something, to get at the Germans. It was quite a natural desire, but one impossible to gratify, and when darkness fell the situation was unchanged — we were still holding ourselves in readiness to attack at short notice. But now we could do something. A great many wounded had been lying out in no-man's land all day. While the light held, rescue was out of the question — a head shown over the parapet immediately drew fire. Stretcher parties were formed, and the ground in front was carefully searched. Unfortunately, most of the company bearers were casualties, and many of the stretchers were destroyed. A large number of wounded were brought in, Worcesters, Inniskillings, and Highlanders. Some were carried on the back, others in waterproof sheets. The ground was so pitted with shell-holes and cut by old trenches, that the work was most difficult, and it must have been very painful to the wounded, but many willing hands were there to help, and every wounded man that was found was carried in. No trace could be found of Lieut. Macnaughton. He was given up lost, but we learned later that he had managed to crawl back to the Inniskillings' lines, wounded in the thigh.

In the small hours of the morning a conference was held at Brigade Headquarters, and at 6.30 a.m, operation orders were issued for a fresh advance. The 7th Division were attacking, and the 6th Brigade had been ordered to secure Ferme Cour d'Avoue The 5th Brigade objective was the Ferme du Bois, with the intention of forming a defensive flank. The 2nd H.L.I. Was brought up from reserve to attack the farm from the captured trenches, that is, from the extreme right of the brigade front. The Glasgow Highlanders were to be in support and the Worcestershires were to occupy the front line as soon as we vacated it. The Oxfords and Inniskillings were to be withdrawn. Zero hour was finally fixed for 9.30 a.m.

The operation was rather complicated, and involved a good deal of movement along crowded trenches. There was no covered communication with the captured trenches, although a shallow trench had been dug part of the distance. The 2nd H.L.I. had to attack on a very narrow front.

The battalion 'side-stepped' along the front line, bringing the right of No.1 Company into the uncompleted communication trench. Immediately the way was clear, company headquarters and No.1 Platoon proceeded up the trench, which soon got very shallow, and then petered out altogether some seventy yards short of the captured Germans' breastwork. The ground fell away very slightly towards a ditch, which ran parallel to the trench about fifteen yards to the right. Except within a foot of the ground, the gap was swept by machine-gunfire from the left and rifle fire from the left front. A number of Oxfords, H.L.I. and Inniskillings, who had been killed while crossing, lay there; the

body of Captain Gausson who had been in command of the 2nd H.L.I. being among, them. Captain Reid reconnoitered the bank of the ditch as a possible line of advance, but the foothold was too precarious and there was nothing for it but to crawl over the open. The surface was mud and water, both bright yellow from the fumes of lyddite. Going on hands and knees No.1 Platoon, under Lieut. McCosh, crossed unscathed, and reached the old German front line, which was so crowded with H.L.I. and Oxfords who had not been able to get back that most of the Highlanders had to take shelter behind the parapets in a position exposed to shell-fire. Major Bock signalled back to Lieut. Glen to keep No.2 Platoon in the communication trench meantime Nos.5 and 4 under Lieut. Anderson were still in the old frontline he then got in touch with the 2nd H.L.I. We were now as close behind them as the situation permitted, and ready to support if required.

At 9.30 two companies of the 2nd gallantly attacked the farm, but were badly cut up by very heavy enfilade fire, and compelled to fall back. The attack was not renewed; to have made another attempt would have only meant throwing away more lives.

The congestion in No.1 Platoon's position had been relieved by sending back the Oxfords to rejoin their battalion in rear. On the left a bombing post was organized under Corporal Paterson to prevent the Germans from working along their old front line. An exchange of bombs was kept up for some time, without any casualties on our part, till the enemy broke off the engagement. Thereafter, an occasional bomb was thrown as a warning to them not to come too near. As it was evident that No.2 Platoon was not required, Lieut. Glen was ordered to take his men back to the breastworks; there they got better protection from shell-fire.

The forward position with its exposed left flank was particularly liable to counter-attack, and indeed a message came from behind with the information that the enemy had been observed to be massing, apparently for that purpose. No. 1 Platoon stood along the parapet waiting for them to come, and hoping that they would, but the attack, if one was intended, did not develop. The enemy confined his retaliation to heavy shell-fire, which lasted throughout the day. During the bombardment all the telephone lines were cut. Sergt. Moffat and the signallers worked hard all day repairing the lines under fire. The chief means of communication, however, had to be by visual and runner.

Further to the right the 2nd South Staffords and 1st Kings after some initial success had also been compelled to fall back, suffering very heavily; among the killed being our friend Lieutenant-Colonel Routledge.

The situation remained unchanged till twenty minutes past five in the afternoon, when Colonel Murray received an order that the battalion would attack the Ferme du Bois at six o'clock, and that simultaneously a bombing attack was to be delivered along the German front line towards the left. This, of course, meant that the Highlanders would have to take over from the 2nd H.L.I. who would require getting back to the breastworks. The changeover itself was bound to be a costly business, even supposing it could be done in time, and the attack — even after a further bombardment — did not appear to have a better chance of success than that of the 2nd H.L.I. on the morning. Fortunately for all concerned the order was cancelled before any serious move was made.

In the evening the 4th (Guards) Brigade went into action on the right of the 6th Brigade, as it was decided to press forward there and to consolidate on our front. After dark No.1 Platoon was withdrawn from its forward position and at an early hour the Highlanders were relieved. At the same time the 1st H.L.I. relieved the 2nd H.L.I.

When the last company filed out of the communication trenches, crossed the Rue du Bois, and dodged in behind the ruins beyond — for the enemies guns were busy again — it was broad daylight. Captain Martyn was still in his aid post, where he and his assistants had worked incessantly for three nights and two days. One or two more cases were handed over to him — men who had been wounded during the relief. We were glad to get away from the shells, which were still bursting, all round the post.

The battalion assembled in a field near Richebourg, beyond the fire zone, and had breakfast. After a rest it moved off, less No.1 Company, which was detailed to take over the prisoners' depot at le Hamel, and marched to les Harisoirs, north-west of Bethune. The 19th was spent in resting and cleaning up, and next day a further move back was made to Hurionville. No.1 Company rejoined in

the early morning of the 22nd. Hrionville lies eight miles to the west of Bethune, as the crow flies. It was a pretty little village quite untouched by war. Here amidst rural surroundings we enjoyed peace, out of range and almost beyond the sound of the guns. During the nine days the casualties had been 5 officers and 209 other ranks, the great majority of these occurred during the last forty-eight hours, but the period of marching and digging and waiting for orders had been in some ways even more trying than the time actually spent in the trenches.

Major-General Horne inspected the battalion, and congratulated it on the creditable part it had taken in the operations. He did not disguise the fact that the results had not been as conclusive as had been hoped, but he was quite satisfied with his division and proud of what it had achieved.

The Battle of Festubert dragged on for about a week after the 2nd Division was withdrawn, but there was practically no further progress. The Ferme du Bois was attacked again, but it was not taken. The net result of the offensive was that the Germans had been pushed back in a four mile front an average distance of six hundred yards. Heavy losses had been inflicted on them, and 785 prisoners had been taken. The territory won was of little value and the cost had been very heavy; the casualties of the 2nd Division alone amounted to 5,446.

It was clear that more intense artillery preparation was needed to give a frontal attack a fair chance of success, and it was proved that we had no advantage over the enemy in guns and shells. To us in the trenches the German guns seemed to fire at least three shells for every one that ours fired — but perhaps we were not in a proper position to give an unbiased opinion.

Chapter 6

SUMMER 1915

The quiet days at Hurionville passed all too quickly. Training was not neglected, of course, but it was a rest that the battalion needed more than anything else. The country was fresh and green, and the weather delightful. A warning order on 27th May stated that the brigade was expected to move shortly, to take over the line south of Cuinchy from the French. On the 29th orders were issued, and at four o'clock that afternoon the Highlanders set off once more for the trenches.

The whole brigade was moving in one long column with transport. Each battalion had its cookers, the smoke from the chimneys giving a promise of tea later on. The Glasgows were the last battalion in the column, and as the troops in front moved over the undulating country, we were able to see our brigade as a complete unit for the first time since joining it. At the front were the 2nd H.L.I. and the 2nd Oxforas, these battalions being first for duty in the trenches. We were passing through an area hitherto outside the British sphere, and our appearance seemed to interest the inhabitants of the villages.

Tea was duly served out during one of the halts, and at half-past ten we arrived at our destination, having covered about sixteen miles. Our billets, which we took over from a French battalion, were in a small mining village on the Bethune -Lens road about a mile due south of Vermelles. Here the battalion remained for four days.

Looking along the road, which ran perfectly straight in a south-easterly direction up the gradual incline of the ridge, which hid the village of Loos, we could see the long white lines of the German trenches. The enemy had a very decided advantage of ground and overlooked all the British trenches and the country behind them. For this reason the communication trenches were much longer than any we had hitherto used; they had indeed been taken so far back that reliefs could be carried out by daylight.

On June 2nd in the afternoon the Glasgows relieved the 2nd H.L.I. on the left of the Brigade front, the Inniskillings taking over from the Oxforas on the right. The trenches were in excellent condition. For a considerable distance the long communication trench was broad enough to take a limber. The soil was white chalk, which made everything look clean. Appearances in many places were deceptive owing to an unfortunate habit our allies had of burying their comrades in the parapet. Poppies grew all over the place, sometimes in great bright red patches.

On the Vermelles front when the 2nd Division took it over from the French peace reigned supreme. The custom seemed to have been for the guns to fire one or two rounds each day just to show that they were still there. We understood that the two battalions which had been in the line had one set of rifles between them which they handed over with the trenches, the relieved battalion marching out armed with carbines. If this were so it was all the more extraordinary to find lots of rifles lying about in the trenches and a great many more out in no-man's land where they lay beside hundreds of dead Frenchmen who had fallen in the last offensive, each with his rifle and fixed bayonet beside him.

The Germans' lines on our right were 500 or 600 yards away, and on the left at least 1000. The battalion, which was now very weak in numbers, owing to casualties, and the large number who had been given commissions, was holding an unusually long front, and all four companies were required to hold the firing line. There had to be considerable gaps between companies and to keep an adequate lookout at night an undue proportion of sentries had to be posted. The French although taking little trouble to bury their dead or to salvage their rifles, had left us plenty of comfortable dug-outs. Some had wire beds in them, an altogether new luxury for us. The weather was perfect, and, except for a slight uneasiness about the weakness of our line; we felt that it was not such a bad war after all.

These conditions, however they might please the infantry in the line, did not meet with the approval of those who ruled our destiny from behind. Things were altogether too peaceful, so our

guns started to ginger-up the enemy, and we were ordered to patrol no-man's land and pick up any Boche we found lying about. The breadth of no-man's land was another cause of concern to the staff, and to correct this we were ordered to dig a more advanced line. The work, of course, had to be done at night, and the whole battalion took a hand during the few hours of darkness. The ground was very hard, and the duty was not a pleasant one, owing to the large number of dead lying about. The Boche did not interfere the first night, but when he saw what we were up to he would open sudden bursts of shell-fire at intervals. After returning to our trenches before dawn and 'standing tot till daylight, we posted sentries and retired to rest till breakfast time — that is, all except officers, N.C.O.'S and men on duty.

The days were passed in shirtsleeves and idleness, for it was very warm and there was nothing to do. Ration parties, however, got plenty of exercise in the long communication trenches. The fine weather had brought out millions of flies. It was found by some sporting spirits that the bullets could be easily extracted from French cartridges and that one could pass the time pleasantly shooting flies.

After five days in the line the battalion was relieved on the night of June 7th by the 19th Bn. London Regiment. The relief was completed by two o'clock in the morning and companies moved back independently to Vaudricourt. Headquarters occupied the Chateau, and as billets were scarce a large number bivouacked in the woods round it in preference to the crowded billets. Battalion sports were held, the usual challenge trophies being competed for. No.2 Company (Captain Wingate) won the football cup and No.3 (Capt. Menzies) the sports aggregate cup.

The 5th Brigade remained in reserve for eight days, and then on 15th June went into the line again. The Glasgows moved into support at Noyelles le Vermelles, a very dirty village. Each night half the battalion was required to continue the construction of the new forward line.

The question of the strength of the battalion had now reached an acute phase. Since January we had not had any reinforcements from home. Although a considerable number of our own wounded had rejoined — a draft had reached us at Hurionville and thirty men arrived while we were at Vaudricourt — the battalion was now very weak. Considering the conditions of the winter and early spring we had lost extraordinarily few men from sickness, but it must be remembered that in addition to the heavy casualties of Festubert each visit to the trenches brought casualties, sometimes only one or two, sometimes more. At Vermelles our losses were very light, but the large number of our N.C.O.'s and men who were now being granted commissions was causing a steady drain. Some of these were retained in the battalion — at this time Private Tom Burton, I. Paterson, and Terry Todd, became officers — but many more went to other units. The regular battalions in the brigade did not lose as many men from this cause, but even if they had it would not have mattered because they received drafts regularly which kept them fairly well up to strength. The result was that with the utmost economy in transport and other necessary services we could only put some 440 rifles into the line. This did not matter very much, for when we were asked to hold a battalion front with what was practically a half-battalion, it could only mean that a territorial was considered equal to two ordinary soldiers — which was flattering to us. Of course it was bound to cause a greater strain on our men; the same look-out had to be kept, the same patrols sent out, the same work done, and the same number of the enemy shot if we were attacked, but "The fewer men the greater share of honour."

It was when the battalion was in support that the shoe pinched. Work parties were wanted every night, and the brigade had a regular programme. It did not call for one company or two companies, but for 200 or 400 men. Thus a digging fatigue that could be 'found' in the other units by, say, two companies, required our whole battalion. If it were called again for the next night, our men would miss their rest two nights running. Colonel Murray secured a modification in our favour, but even with this our men individually continued to do more than their share of the work in the brigade.

At home we had two splendid reserve units in our second and third line battalions, both well over strength. Officers and men asked for nothing better than to be allowed to join us, yet they were not permitted to do so, and we were allowed to dwindle till we were at little more than half-strength. The only way to account for such a state of matters was that a deliberate attempt was being made to

kill the Territorial Force. Who was behind this, and why? It is a fact that in France there was instructions issued that when territorial battalions came down to a strength of 400 they were to be amalgamated. In many cases this was actually done. The position of the Glasgow Highlanders was precarious. If no drafts came we would soon reach this figure. Even if we had no killed or wounded, the drain of men for commissions would bring us down to it in a month or two.

The Commanding Officer took the only effective course open to him — he wrote to the Lord Lieutenant of the County of the City of Glasgow explaining the position the Glasgow Highlanders were in, and asking his help. Fortunately, in Sir Thomas Dunlop we — and indeed the whole Territorial Force — found a worthy champion. He went straight to the War Office and told them that Glasgow simply would not stand it. The result was that in due course we got drafts again, but even so, for many months we were not very generously treated in this respect.

Our turn for the trenches came round and we relieved the Oxfords. Vermelles had to be passed through on the way up to the line, and just as the last company was clear of the village the Boche started to shell it. Possibly our movement had been spotted from one of the enemy's captive balloons. We now took over a sector on the left of our previous one, and some way south of the Hohenzollern Redoubt. Battalion headquarters were in le Rutoire Farm, very comfortable quarters. Again all four companies were required in the front line, but this time a company of Inniskillings was detailed as a support. After a quiet spell of four days, the battalion was relieved by the 'Skins', and moved back to La Bourse. On the 28th the 5th Brigade was relieved. The Highlanders spent that night at Fouquieres and the next in Bethune. On the 30th the Brigade took over Givenchy and we marched there in the afternoon to relieve the 6th Gordons.

As if to welcome us back to Givenchy, rain had been falling in torrents most of the day. Nos. 1 and 3 Companies had been detailed for the trenches, No. 3 on the right on high ground, No. 1 on low ground towards Le Plantin. As the latter filed into the communication trench at 'Windy Corner' preceded by a guide from Aberdeen, the men soon found themselves knee deep in mud and water.

Conditions in the little salient were much the same as they had been during the winter. There was the same constant pressure on the Germans' part to push us off this extreme tail end of the Aubers Ridge, and the same determination on our part to retain our precarious foothold. Both sides indulged freely in mining, bombing, and shellings of all kinds. One weapon in which the Boche had a great advantage over us was the trench mortar. Their minnenwerfer threw a great cylinder filled with high explosive, which we had every reason to cordially detest.

No. 3 Company held 'Scottish Trench' and the sunken road in front of it at the tip of the salient, where several large craters had been blown. Both sides were feverishly engaged in mining operations here, and in the sunken road there was no lack of material for making defenses. Hundreds of sandbags, filled with black mud, had been brought out of the mine. One platoon held the road, which was without doubt one of the nastiest places on the whole Western Front. There were bombing posts on the craters, but the worst feature of the place was the continual peppering it got day and night with 'Minnies'. Fortunately, these horrors could be seen as they came soaring high up in the air, slowly turning over and over, then descending with ever increasing speed till they crashed on the ground and exploded with a report which put heavy howitzer shells to shame. At night sparks from the fuse marked the line of flight. Sentries with whistles were posted, whose sole duty it was to look out for them and warn the men in the trench. Then it was a case of every man for himself. With practice one soon learned to judge very accurately where 'Minnie' was going to fall — and one acted accordingly. It is true that her bark was worse than her bite, for the metal casing being thin, the effect of the explosion was local, but even if by taking thought and plenty of exercise the platoon was able on the whole to escape serious casualties, the ordeal was a very great strain on the nerves.

Added to this there was the uncertainty about when and where the next German mine would go up, so the garrison had to be changed every twelve hours. The three platoons, which with company headquarters occupied Scottish Trench, had not apparently such a trying time, but they were subjected to heavy shell-fire and in reality suffered heavier losses.

The company on the left had three platoons and headquarters in the front line, which ran some

way back from the sunken road. This trench on its right came into the minnenwerfer area, but the place being at a re-entrant did not require to be held. No.1 Company also got a good deal of attention from the enemy's guns, but fire was not so accurate here as in Scottish Trench, perhaps because the trench being on low ground was not so easily observed. An old trench ran diagonally across the front from the line our men occupied to the bluff in front of Sunken Road. Dead Men's Trench — the deceased occupants being Germans — had to be patrolled throughout the night.

There was one notable difference since the battalion had held Givenchy in February: our guns now had shells to fire, and could retaliate with effect when required. The minnenwerfer was comparatively easily dealt with. The company commander had only to 'phone the word "Minnie" back to Headquarters and at once the batteries were informed. Our guns immediately plastered the German second line, and the minnenwerfer ceased fire — for a time.

The two support companies lived in houses at Windy Corner. Reliefs were carried out every two days. No.2, Capt. Wingate, relieving Capt. A.H. Menzies on the right, and No.4, Major Bock, sharing the left with No.1, Capt. Reid, while in support the companies worked on the various strong points in Givenchy.

After the battalion had been some days in the Windy Corner sector, superior authority ordered the construction of a trench to join, the Sunken Road with the right of the left company's trench. A strong working party was put on, and completed the digging in one night. Next day the enemy guns blew the trench to pieces. Fortunately it had not been occupied. It was in an exposed position on the slope, and lying at right angles to the normal front, offered an easy target. It seemed a waste of energy to go on with the work, but being ordered to do so, we repaired the trench the next night, only to see it destroyed once more the following forenoon. The idea was given up eventually, the trench not being really required, and in any case no battalion commander would have occupied it. More useful work was done on the left where good wire entanglements were put up in front of the first and second lines, and at Sunken Road where deep narrow saps were cut into the forward bank, and 'T' sap-heads dug and eventually joined up into a new line giving excellent protection. Unfortunately this position could not be wired as it was too near the German bombing posts.

Sometimes the front trenches were cleared for a bombardment of the craters in which the enemy was working. On these occasions, of course, the enemy retaliated on our trenches. On July 9th No.3 Company was particularly heavily shelled and lost a lot of men. Bugler Logan, among others, displayed great disregard for danger in rescuing wounded under fire. No.1 Company also suffered from the shelling; on its right some men were buried, and Lieut. Matthew Anderson and Corporal Mackenzie dug them out while 'Minnies' and shells were still falling round them.

The next time the two companies went into the line; their positions were changed in order that No.3 should have a turn in the quieter position. As luck would have it, on this occasion the Left got the worst of the shelling, and No.1 from the comparative calm of Scottish Trench watched shell after shell falling in and around its old trench.

The battalion remained at Windy Corner for a fortnight, being relieved on the evening of 13th July. It was a brigade relief, followed by a march back to Bethune. By midnight all companies were settled in billets in the Rue d'Aire. The following day Brig.-Gen. Chichester relinquished command of the Brigade, being succeeded by Brigadier-General Corkran, Coldstream Guards.

There was now no question of the battalion's being allowed to dwindle away to nothing. Since Sir Thomas Dunlop had taken the matter up; reinforcements had arrived from the 3rd Line. These new men had had a stormy introduction to war at Windy Corner. Captain A.C. Frame and Lieut. Cowie had rejoined, quite recovered from their wounds, and from the 2nd Line had come Captain T.H.H. Warren and Lieutenant E.J. Whitson.

During this rest the Glasgow Highlanders gave a concert in the Bethune Theatre. The performance was open at a nominal charge to all troops in the town. Capt. Acklom was stage manager and all the favourite songs were included in the programme: Pte. Dyer of Transport Section being encored again and again in 'The Long Long Trail'. A real beauty chorus of local ladies, whose services Capt. Acklom had secured, gave a touch of novelty to the proceedings.

Aquatic sports were held in the Bethune swimming pond. The next day the 5th Brigade moved into the line at Cuinchy, the Glasgows taking over the Support Point and Cambrai Redoubt

with two companies, the other two remaining in reserve at Annequin, whence they supplied large mining fatigues for the front line. This work was hard and monotonous, working the pumps and carrying filled sandbags out of the mines. After four days the companies changed over, and three days later the battalion moved over to Givenchy and took over the line from the Canal to Duck's Bill exclusive, with two companies in front and two in support trenches. Capt. Wingate's company held the front line next the canal with Capt. A.H. Menzies' in support at Spoil Bank. There were three communication trenches: Cheyne Walk, Waterloo Road, and Orchard Road. Major Bock was on the left with Capt. Reid in support in Cambridge Street. Here there were also three C.T.'s, Baker Street, Finchley Road, and Glasgow Street. Headquarters was in dug-outs in Gummer Siding behind Orchard Farm. No.1. Company's position was the one the battalion had held while attached to the 6th Brigade in February. Every two days the companies changed over. The only noteworthy incident during this spell was a mine, which the enemy put up at Duck's Bill on the 2nd H.L.I. front. The 2nd Battalion had some casualties, including Capt. Hooper. The Brigade was relieved and moved back to Bethune on August 7th.

After eight days the Brigade went into the line again. Sunday Church Parade was held at 9 a.m. and at 2 o'clock the battalion marched to le Preol. Although within three miles of the German trenches this little village, pleasantly situated on the Beuvry branch of the canal in wooded country, had been practically untouched by shell-fire. The 5th Brigade had again taken over Givenchy and as reserve battalion the Glasgows supplied mining fatigues and carrying parties. The weather was hot, and every day bathing parades in the canal were much enjoyed.

In due course our turn for the trenches came round again, and we took over the Duck's Bill sector from the 2nd H.L.I. That night a mine was blown by us and Nos.4 and 2 Companies, which were in front, were kept on the qui vive dodging the 'Minnies' which came over by way of retaliation. No.4, which held the Duck's Bill, had a particularly hot time. A considerable part of the front line breastworks were flattened and there were a good many casualties. Major Bock and some of his officers had a narrow escape being blown into company headquarters' dugout by a 'Minnie', but fortunately none of them were even wounded. The enemy snipers prevented work on the damaged trenches till dark, and even then their repair was dangerous work.

On 22nd Nos. 1 and 3 Companies which had been in occupation of various strong points relieved Nos. 4 and 2 respectively, and two days later the 2nd H.L.I. came up and took over the sector, the Highlanders moving back to le Preol, where they remained till the Brigade was relieved and returned to Bethune.

It will be noticed that periods of rest were now coming at regular intervals, the brigade generally being sixteen days in the line and eight out of it. Within the brigade battalions had two spells of four days in the trenches each time. This could now be done as several new army divisions had come out from home. In the 2nd Division too there had been changes, the 4th(Guards) Brigade having been taken away on the formation of the Guards' Division, Its place was taken by the 19th Brigade, which was composed of the 2nd Argyll's, 2nd Royal Welch Fusiliers, 1st Middlesex, and the 1st and 5th Cameronians, and which up till now had been a detached brigade.

Towards the end of our rest, which was only six days this time, we gave our second big concert in the theatre. This time we found our own beauty chorus. Lieutenants McCosh, Fairlie Alexander and Terry Todd appeared as girls, somewhat tall and broad, but wonderfully pretty in their make-up nonetheless. When they came on to sing in the chorus of Capt. Wilfred Whitson's song 'Gilbert the Filbert the Colonel of the Knuts' the audience nearly took the roof off the house. Very few recognized them and one member of the battalion went so far as to state that he was in the habit of 'walking out' with one of them. The old men's chorus, Major John Menzies, Major Bock, Captain Beattie and Lieut. A.C. Murray were also a conspicuous success in their rendering of the 'Three Jolly Sailormen', but the star turn of the evening was Captain Acklom's song 'Mein Vaterland'.

On 3rd September the Highlanders again took over the canal—Duck's Bill (exclusive) sector of the Givenchy front, companies occupying their old positions there and doing two-day reliefs as before. Preparations were being made for the coming offensive, in which it was whispered that we were going to use gas. We dug a series of assembly trenches behind Givenchy. After a

comparatively uneventful ten days we handed over to the 5th Cameronians and moved back to Bethune, this time to Montmorency Barracks.

Chapter 7

THE BATTLE OF LOOS

One year of war had now passed and it was becoming increasingly evident that there was no short road to victory. The costly failure of our offensives at Neuve Chapelle and Festubert and of the more ambitious efforts of the French had proved the enormous strength of the German lines.

In the East, Russia's initial success had been short-lived and her armies during the spring and summer and been driven back along the whole front from the Gulf of Riga to the Carpathians. Our adventure in Gallipoli had failed. The wonderful troops landed in April could do no more than hold their ground, the renewed effort in June and July when the 52nd Division had been so badly cut up, had scarcely improved the position, and the unfortunate Suvla Bay landing in August had gained nothing worth having.

Since the 2nd Battle of Ypres, the Germans having need of their reserves in the East, had stood on the defensive on the Western Front, probably quite content to see Britain waste her strength by attacking with insufficient forces. While we had been preoccupied with plans and preparations for attack, they had concentrated their efforts on defence. The wire in front of their trenches was yards thick and they had constructed deep dug-outs which were almost proof against the heaviest shell-fire.

When the Glasgow Highlanders arrived in Bethune, it was common knowledge that we were once more on the eve of an offensive. Everyone now knew too that we were going to use gas, although to talk about it was strictly against orders. The clans were gathering. Two splendid new Scottish divisions, the 9th and the 15th had already been some time in the district. On a previous occasion we had watched the units of the 9th march into Bethune. Full battalions of big men they had swung along to the pipes, giving promise of what they might shortly perform.

We had a fair idea where the attack would be delivered, but we did not know when, except that it must be soon to get the advantage, of good weather. In this state of expectancy the battalion left Bethune, marched to Givenchy and again took over the canal sector, Nos.3 and 1 Companies going into the front line.

In due course operation orders were issued. As at Festubert the battle was to be fought in co-operation with the French. The main attack was to be undertaken by four of their armies in Champagne. By breaking the southern face of the great German salient there, it was hoped that the enemy communications would be so threatened that he would have to retire on a broad front. To assist this operation by threatening the salient from the north, a combined attack by d'Urbal's 10th French Army and Haig's 1st British Army was to take place on a front of fourteen miles immediately south of the La Bassee Canal. In addition to a holding attack at Givenchy, there were to be three others farther north — at Neuve Chapelle by the Indian Corps, at Armentieres by the 3rd. Corps, and at Hooge by the 5th Corps. C Of the British 1st Army the 1st and 4th Corps, each three divisions strong were to advance with the object of securing the line Loos-Hulloch- La Bassee and then to push on to secure the crossings of the Haute Deule Canal. The distribution was: — 4th Corps (Rawlinson): 47th (London Territorial) Division, 15th (Scottish New Army) Division and 1st Division. 1st Corps (Gough): 7th Division, 9th (Scottish New Army) Division and 2nd Division. The 5th Brigade was north of the canal, and had orders to carry out a special holding attack.

Preparations for the attack were pushed on. Quantities of Royal Engineers material were carried up to forward dumps; telephone lines were dug in along the communication-trenches, an advanced battalion headquarters was established at Spoil Bank where there was good observation, and emplacements for the gas cylinders were dug under the parapet of the front line. It was intended during the bombardment to clear the front line, but a lookout had still to be kept, so sandbag sentry posts were built at intervals along it. The battalion pioneers constructed a large dug-out behind Orchard Farm for the aid post — Chateaus Martyn had for entrance a sloping passage suitable for stretchers. Everything was done quietly and deliberately, without any of the strain, on the men, which had preceded Festubert. Then just a day or two before the battle a new type of bomb was

issued.

It was a thoroughly bad bomb, but even if it had been a good one there was little time for training in its use. The ball bomb was too heavy, but the chief objection was that it had to be lighted on a sort of safety match-box carried on a brassard on the left arm everyone asked, "What about a wet day?" The reason given for its issue to the 5th Brigade was that the Mills bombs were required for the main attack; a reasonable enough explanation as far as it went —what we failed to understand was why the stupid thing existed at all.

During the night 20th/21st September the preliminary work was completed by the bringing up of the gas cylinders, which were placed in the emplacements prepared for them and covered with sandbags. Before dawn all was ready, the front line garrison was reduced to a few posts, the remainder being stowed away in deep dug-outs along Strathcona Walk, the second line. Then the bombardment commenced. The guns kept it up fairly steadily all day, peppering the German trenches, cutting wire and paying particular attention on our front to the Tortoise, as the sector of the Boche front line adjoining the canal was named. Over at Cuinchy, however, the fire was heavier, as was to be expected considering that it was in the area of the main attack.

While the guns were booming, we had time to digest our orders. The 5th Brigade attack was to be carried out by the 2nd H.L.I., 1st Queens and 2nd Oxforas. The three battalions advancing aide by side had for their objective the salient opposite our line between Duck's Bill and Sunken Road, thence to the line Chapelle St. Roch - Cantelena, a distance of about 1500 yards beyond the German front line. Gas was to be released at zero and the attack was to be launched ten minutes later, covered by a smoke screen on both flanks. Zero could not be fixed till almost the last minute, as everything depended on the state of the wind.

Zero plus forty minutes was the time fixed for the main attack south of the canal, and the Glasgow Highlander were than to advance on a narrow front along the north bank, capture the Tortoise, and then to push along Towpath Alley to the bend in the canal about a mile beyond the starting point. Capt. Wingate's company (No.2) was to attack with Capt. A. H. Menzies (No.3) in support.

The intention of the orders was fairly obvious. The Duck's Bill assault was timed for half an hour before the main attack with the object of keeping the enemy's attention fixed North of the canal. The Glasgow's attack on the Tortoise was delayed till the main attack had started because along the embankment on the south bank the Boche were known to have advanced machine gun posts, which would enfilade our advance. In addition to this the 2nd South Stafford's' front line at the canal was some fifty yards behind ours. The orders provided for our attack not starting 'till the South Stafford's had reached a certain point. Capt. Wingate and Capt. Kilby, who commanded the company over the canal, met and arranged inter-communication accordingly.

The general plan seemed to be sound, but as far as it concerned the 5th. Brigade and particularly the Glasgow Highlanders, the difficulties were only too obvious. The two attacks were to be made on a narrow front with all the disadvantages, which this implies. However the enemy's position opposite the Duck's Bill and the Sunken Road being a square fronted salient, was not adapted for protection by cross fire from the flanks, and up there no-man's land was only about one hundred to two hundred yards across.

The attack on the Tortoise, which was to be undertaken by the Highlanders on a one-company frontage, was a very tough proposition. It would have no chance of success unless the gas turned out to be completely effective, for in addition to the cross-fire from the machine guns on the embankment the advance of about 350 yards could be enfiladed from the left where the enemy's front line, which was not being attacked, formed an arc about 700 yards across. It is true that smoke bombs were to be thrown from the trenches on this flank, but the effectiveness of such a screen was doubtful. Even if the Tortoise were taken it seemed rather an ambitious, not to say foolhardy, project to send two isolated companies out into the blue with an objective a mile away.

The bombardment continued during the 22nd and 23rd. The Highlanders were ordered to make a demonstration. Dummies had been prepared of stuffed sandbags on sticks. In the afternoon the bombardment suddenly grew more intense, Nos.3 and 1 Companies, which were in the front line, opened rapid fire, then the buglers blew the 'charge', the pipes played, dummies and bayonets

were displayed over the parapet and everyone cheered and shouted. This stage-management had the result of immediately bringing a storm of rapid fire from the Boche opposite, and in a minute or two his guns joined in with a rigorous barrage in our lines. This of course, was not unexpected, but we could only crouch down in the bottom of the trenches and pray that there should be no direct hits — and fortunately there were none. On the 24th, the day before the attack — if the wind permitted — the enemy's guns were much more active than they had been. The wind was light and variable, blowing chiefly from the south — that is, along our line. Zero hour could not be fixed. That night the companies took up their positions. Captain Wingate moved into his jumping off position next the canal with Captain Menzies behind. The remainder of the front line was taken over by No.4 Company. Major Bock's orders were to hold the line against counter-attack, to put up a smoke screen, and if necessary to be prepared to go forward in support of the attacking companies. No.1 Company was to take no part in the attack. It was distributed by platoons and half-platoons over the various strong points of Givenchy. The most important of these was the 'Keep', which was garrisoned by one platoon and company headquarters. It was a small fort constructed out of some houses behind the Church Galleries, partly consisting of the cellars with loopholes practically on ground level, giving all round fire. Above was about eight feet of iron rails, sandbags and bricks. All open spaces were well wired, and there were three land mines, which could be fired electrically from within. The Keep had to be held at all costs, and large stores of S.A.A., bombs, food and water had been collected. With the exception of Moat Farm — No.1 Platoon's post — in front of Windy Corner, it was the most strongly protected place in Givenchy, but in it occurred the only casualties the company suffered next day; Company Sergeant Major Manley and one man were killed by one of several heavy shells which came right through into the galleries.

Throughout the night the direction of the wind was still unsatisfactory and it was very doubtful if the attack could take place in the morning. However, at about 4 a.m. a message received fixed zero for 5.50 am. The wind had veered towards south-west, but was very light and changeable and heavy rain was falling.

Promptly at zero the 'gas corporals' turned on the gas. It hissed from the tubes, which led over the parapet and very gradually drifted half left, towards the German trenches. There was a steady drizzle of rain and the cloud, although predominantly yellow, took on all the colours of the rainbow. A little gas found its way back into our trenches, but as everyone was wearing a helmet no harm was done. No.4 Company threw out smoke bombs to cover the right flank of the 2nd H.L.I. from view. At six o'clock the three battalions attacked. The 2nd H.L.I. and the Queens succeeded in capturing the German front line but the Oxforde left was held up by heavy flanking fire. The enemy, as soon as they saw the gas, had lit fires along their parapet, and these combined with the lightness of the wind took away from its effectiveness.

As half-past six drew near, the leading platoons of No.2 Company, No.5 Platoon under Lieut. Carrick MacLelland and No.7 under Lieut. Fairlie Alexander, were lined along the trench near the canal waiting for the word to advance. The gas from our own front had not gone near the Tortoise owing to the slant of the wind. Most of the 6th Brigade's gas seemed to have found its way into the canal, and large quantities rolled along our trench. The gas from the canal was rapidly growing thicker as the time to advance drew near.

When about five minutes were still to go, a slant of wind brought it up so thick that the fumes penetrated all the helmets. The poison was undoubtedly far more concentrated than any that could have got within 100 yards of the Germans, and the two platoons were practically knocked out within a few minutes. The disaster might have been worst had it not been for the coolness of the officers and N.C.O.'s; prominent among whom was Lieut. Carrick MacLelland He, Lieut. Ernest Whiston who came up from No.6 Platoon, and Company Sergeant Major Mac nab, had the trench cleared with anti-gas sprayers. The most badly gassed were sent back, but the time to go forward had already passed, and 16 men, all more or less affected, now represented the two platoons. Captain Wingate ordered up the support platoons to take their places; these came up at the double, but by the time they were ready to go over the top it was 6.40, ten minutes late.

The South Staffords had advanced at 6.30, but as far as could be seen from our trenches had simply been shot down as they went forward. Captain Kilby who commanded the company

attacking along the embankment was seen to fall, and his men were simply withered away. The German front line was full of men evidently quite unaffected by the gas.

The situation, which confronted Captain Wingate when his second two platoons were ready to go over the top, had changed so completely that he ordered them to stand fast, and reported to headquarters asking for instructions. He was ordered not to proceed with the attack, but to send forward a patrol to find out to what extent it would draw fire. Corporal Beattie, who had originally been detailed to precede the attack with a patrol, was suffering from the gas but when he was informed that another N.C.O. would take his place, he insisted on being allowed to go. The patrol, consisting of Corporal Beattie,

Privates Bruce, Robertson and Smith, went out from 'Death or Glory' sap and almost immediately drew heavy fire. Before they had gone thirty yards the patrol was finished. From the trench it could not be seen whether they had been hit, or were taking cover. After an interval in which no movement could be seen, Lance-Corporal Watson and Private Miller volunteered to go out and see what had happened. They crawled out from the sap and found that Corp. Beattie and Pte. Bruce had been killed and Pte. Smith was lying wounded. Pte. Robertson had managed to take cover untouched. Unfortunately, nothing could be done for Smith, who was dying. The three crawled back again and made their report.

Corporal Beattie was one of the old Glasgow Highlanders who had rejoined on the outbreak of war. About a year before he had gone to Canada. He left the battalion very reluctantly, and in saying good-bye to his Company Commander Captain A.H. Menzies, told him that he could be depended upon if the battalion ever needed him. How well he fulfilled his promise. He and Privates Bruce and Smith sacrificed their lives for their comrades by going out and facing almost certain death.

Before long, definite information was available that the attack of the 19th and 6th Brigades had failed completely. At Duck's Bill the H.L.I. and Queens had taken the enemies second line, and the former had even penetrated into the third, but the Germans counter-attacked fiercely and bombed them out of their positions. Owing to the rain the ball bombs were of little use, and our men had no chance against the enemy who had an unlimited supply of better bombs. By 9.40 the three battalions were back in their own trenches, having suffered very heavy losses.

Orders being received that the attack north of the canal would be discontinued, preparations were made to receive a counter-attack. The casualties in the battalion from fire and gas amounted to 120. No.2 Company, which had suffered much the most severely, was relieved during the afternoon by No.1 and took over the redoubts.

The night was feverish, but there was no incident of importance. The 26th also passed comparatively quietly, and next day the battalion was relieved and marched to le Quesnoy; the following day it moved again to Beuvry, and on the 29th took over the line again, this time at Cambrin. As far as the 2nd Division was concerned, the result of the fighting on the 25th was that no progress had been made in spite of heavy losses. The three subsidiary attacks in the north had met with initial success; by the evening however, our troops were all back in their old positions. The 4th Corps on the other hand, had scored a magnificent success. The 47th Division had taken the Double Grassier and advanced to the Twin Towers of Loos. The 15th Division had swept through Loos, captured Hill 70, and continued the advance down the slope beyond towards Lens — unfortunately there were no supports to back them up. On the left the 1st Division had reached the outskirts of Hulloch. On the 1st Corps front the 7th Division had taken the quarries, and its foremost troops had entered Citie St. Elie; the right of the 9th Division had captured Fosse 8 and advanced to Haisnes, but the left next the 2nd Division had made no progress.

These achievements were so good that had reserves been sufficient and at hand, the battle might have been a decisive victory. Unfortunately, the only reserve was the newly-formed 11th Corps, commanded by our old Brigade Commander General Baking, and consisting of the new Guards Division and two New Army divisions, the 21st and 24th which had never been in action. On the 25th September the Guards Division was at Lillers, twenty miles away.

The 21st and 24th Divisions came up late in the day, and in the ding-dong fighting that followed a lot of ground was lost along the front. Attack and counter-attack followed each other. On

the right the Guards Division came into action on the 27th, and in a magnificent advance regained a lot of ground, but did not manage to hold Hill 70. On the 7th Division's front the enemy managed finally to hold the Quarries. Fosse 8 was also lost, but we retained the Hohenzollern Redoubt.

On the night of 29th September the 5th Brigade relieved the 28th Brigade of the 9th Division, the 2nd Queens and the Glasgow Highlanders going into the front line. We took over from the 9th Scottish Rifles. This battalion, along with the 10th H.L.I. had vainly assaulted again and again, and what had been a strong battalion was now represented by no more than one weak company. The rest, except for the wounded who had been brought back, were lying out in no-man's land

The weather had quite broken down, and the trenches were in a deplorable condition. No active operations were ordered, and after twenty-four hours of cleaning up the trenches and burying the dead, the battalion was relieved by the 5th S.R.; the 19th Brigade, which was in our left, having been ordered to extend its front. The battalion, after a night in le Preol, was on the move again next morning.

The 5th brigade had been ordered to take over the trenches immediately north of the Vermelles-Hulloch road. It concentrated at a point about half a mile west of Vermelles and formed up in some fields, quite in the open. The situation was uncomfortable, as an enemy observation balloon could be seen in the distance. However, some old trenches were found not far away, and orders were issued for their occupation by companies in case of necessity. The Boone let us eat our dinners in peace, and then the Brigade moved off. Shortly afterwards the place was shelled.

With the 2nd H.L.I. and Oxfords leading, the Brigade marched through Vermelles and up the Hulloch road. Progress was very slow indeed, for the road was packed with troops and wagons moving both ways. It was also under shell-fire. The rendezvous for guides was the Chapelle Notre Dame de Consolation, a little shrine by the roadside. By the time the battalion reached this point it was quite dark. Companies in turn picked up their guides from the Wilts Regiment, and in succession turned into a communication trench, which ran parallel to the road on the left. Following this for about 1000 yards the battalion reached its position, which was in support in the old British front line.

In front the advanced positions were held by the 2nd H.L.I. and Oxfords. The former battalion occupied Gun Trench, but a section of it, about 200 yards in length, was still held by the Germans. On the night of 2nd October the H.L.I. attacked the pocket from both flanks and from the front, but although the bombing attack from the south penetrated the enemy's position three times, the other attacks failed and the Germans remained masters of the situation. The Glasgow's' participation in this action consisted only in carrying up S.A.A. and bombs to the 2nd Battalion and looking after the dumps.

The following afternoon the enemy violently counter-attacked the 6th Brigade on our left from the direction of the quarries, and were brilliantly repulsed by the King's Royal Rifles. That night the Guards took over from the 2nd Division. The relief was carried out under a heavy bombardment. The shelling was so heavy that it would have been folly to have taken the platoons over the open, and the communication trenches seemed to be interminable. The simultaneous movement of four brigades, made the move complicated in the extreme, out-going troops had to give way to those coming in, and some of the platoons took four hours to reach Vermelles, a distance of only a mile-and-a-half. A night march of other six miles brought the battalion to Bethune.

The following evening the brigade moved further back, the Highlanders going to Hingette, where five days' training, chiefly in bombing, was carried out. A bombing company was formed, the representatives of the battalion being Lieut. W. Fairlie Alexander, two N.C.O.'s and twenty-five men.

Meanwhile, on the battlefield the Germans were making strenuous efforts to regain their lost territory. Their counter-attacks met with little success and were very costly. However, they did succeed in retaking the Hohenzollern Redoubt.

On October 10th the 5th Brigade went into the line again, the 6th and 19th Brigades remaining behind. The Highlanders marched to Cambrin, had dinner there, and at half-past two commenced the relief. The sector taken over was immediately north of the Hohenzollern. On the

right were the Queens and beyond them the 6th Division; the 7th Division held the line from our left to the canal.

An attack by the 46th Division on the Hohenzollern had been ordered. In the plan certain duties had been assigned to the 5th Brigade, The bombers were to proceed up New Trench, a sap connecting the Queens' front line with the centre of Little Willie, supported by the Queens. Having reached Little Willie they were to turn right, and borne towards the Hohenzollern to meet the 46th Division; and left towards Mad Point, where Little Willie joined Fosse Trench. In the event of the attack on the Hohenzollern being successful the Highlanders were to dash across no-man's land for Mad Point. The 5th Brigade were also responsible for a smoke barrage and gas was to be used. The enemy pocket in Gun Trench and the quarries were also being attacked.

The two companies in the front line were No.1 and No.5, the latter being temporarily under the command of Lieut. Matthew Anderson of No.1 Company. No.1 Company was on the right, and near where it joined with the Queens, a sap went out a short distance, Work was being continued night and day to get this sap as far as possible towards Mad Point before the attack. Sapping is slow work, however, and the battalion was ordered to send out 100 men at night to dig in the open. It was pointed out that owing to the configuration of the ground — which rose slightly, and then fell away again towards the German trenches — the work party would be against the sky-line in full view of the enemy from two directions, and that during the whole time the men were out they could be completely enfiladed, The reply from Brigade was that the attempt must be made.

The work party was detailed from No.4 Company, which was in support, and as soon as it was dark, 100 men armed with picks and shovels under Lieut Duvoisin reported in the front line. Col. Murray had instructed Capt. Reid to superintend the work, and before taking the party out he and Duvoisin went to have a look at the ground. Immediately they got to the place where the work was to be done, machine gun fire was opened on them from the front and right. Duvoisin was hit twice, first through one arm and then through the other. It was obvious that this was aimed fire and that if two could not move without being seen, a hundred could not hope to work, They got back to the trench without further damage, and almost at once the enemy's field-guns opened fire, Capt. Reid ordered the men to stand fast, and reported to Col. Murray, who informed higher authority that the work could not be carried out.

Next day our guns were very active shelling the trenches opposite and wire cutting. Detailed orders were issued. To No.1 Company fell the duty of attacking Mad Point — if the operation of the 46th Division were successful, The order of attack was platoon waves, No.1 leading under Lieut, McCosh; No.4 Company was in support.

On the morning of the 13th everything was, in readiness, and the wind — though rather light — was favourable. Zero hour for the gas was one o'clock in the afternoon, and the attack on the Hohenzollern was timed for an hour later. During the forenoon the redoubt was subjected to an intense bombardment. It was the greatest concentration of guns we had seen so far, and the area almost seemed to be boiling. The enemy retaliated all along our front,

At one o'clock the gas was turned on. It went over all right at first, and was a signal for the doubling of the enemy's shelling. There were a number of direct hits on our trenches causing casualties, and one shell burst a gas pipe. The trench immediately filled with gas, Lieut. Anderson hurried to the spot and screwed off the gas, but not before several men, including himself, had been badly gassed. At one time the gas had to be turned off owing, to a change of wind,

In addition to the bombs along the front line, the brigade trench mortars firing from behind the Queens put up a smoke barrage. They immediately drew the fire of the enemy guns. One shell got a direct hit on a dump of smoke bombs, and set it on fire. Dense columns of smoke rolled over towards the Hohenzollern, This drew more fire from the enemy, and the 5th Brigade battery along with those of the 46th lost very heavily. All the mortars were served as long as there were men to fire them, or bombs to fire. Some of the batteries were practically wiped out.

Among the killed was Lieut. Alexander Wingate. His exceptional ability had been recognized when he had been granted the first commission given in the field, but it was not only as a resourceful officer that his loss was felt in the battalion, for his keen sense of humour and cheerfulness under all circumstances had been assets that we had all learned to value.

While Sandy Wingate and the trench mortar men were sacrificing their lives to give them cover, the men of the 46th Division assaulted the Hohenzollern, and at the same time the 5th Brigade bombers attacked up New Trench. The gas seemed to have had little effect on the Germans, and all that was gained was a lodgement in the western part of the redoubt. On No.1 Company's front the enemy was very lively, giving bursts of rapid fire, which made it obvious that the attack on Mad Point would be a very costly affair. However, it soon became evident that sufficient progress had not been made on the right to justify the attempt, and late in the afternoon this was officially confirmed, no further progress in the Hohenzollern having been made. On the right the enemy pocket in Gun Trench was taken. Casualties on the 15th amounted to twenty.

Early next morning another unsuccessful attack was made on the Hohenzollern, and thus in anti-climax ended the Battle of Loos. The 1915 offensive had failed in its major objectives. Like ourselves, the French in Champagne had seemed at one time to be on the point of breaking through, but the enemy's reserve had held them up. D'Urbal's 10th Army had made a good advance, but the crest of the Vimy Ridge was still held by the Germans. In spite of the very heavy cost in life, the Allies' gains were only of tactical importance; we seemed as far as ever from breaking the Germans' front in the west.

On the 15th the battalion was relieved by the 2nd H.L.I., and moved back to Beuvry. Active operations for the time being were over. Even if winter had not been coming on, the divisions which had fought at Loos were in no condition to renew the offensive. The morale of the troops was still good in spite of the heavy losses, but it must be admitted that the edge had been taken off the splendid enthusiasm of the new army battalions. Even among the older divisions, which went into the battle with memories of Neuve Chapelle and Festubert to damp their ardour, the disappointment in the failure of the offensive was very great. Too much had been expected of the gas. It had not surprised the enemy, and now it never would.

It was only natural too for the infantry to feel some lack of confidence in the higher command, considering how little had been done to exploit the splendid successes on three-quarters of the battlefield on September 25th. What was the use of breaking the enemy's front if there were no reserves available to go through? If there were not sufficient troops in France, why had the battle been fought? We had failed in Gallipoli and now we had failed in France. If the forces available had been concentrated on one or other enterprise it might have succeeded.

Chapter 8

WINTER 1915—1916

Beuvry, which before the Battle of Loos had been a comparatively quiet place, was now regularly under shell-fire, and during the three days in brigade reserve the battalion had several casualties.

On October 18th it moved up to Cambrin and took over the trenches from the 2nd H.L.I. The construction of deep dug-outs was ordered a hint that the offensive was over. The work was under the supervision of the sappers, and 120 men were put under their orders. Although several drafts had joined the battalion since July, companies in the line were reduced to an average of ninety rifles. Besides the work at the dug-outs, the empty gas cylinders had to be carried out, and company commanders were hard put to it at times to find men for the not unimportant duty of holding the front line.

The 5th Brigade was relieved by the 2nd Guards Brigade. The Highlanders handed over to a battalion of the Scots Guards, and moved back to Bethune and billets in the Montmorency Barracks. A few days later Colonel Murray received congratulations 'through the usual channels' on the efficiency of the arrangements for the relief, the expeditious manner in which it had been carried out, and the condition of the trenches. The Guards had taken the unusual course of making a special report. Considering the high standard which the Guards always set to themselves, we were proud of their praise, and grateful for the good feeling which had prompted it.

The brigade went into the line again. The 2nd H.L.I. had been at Gonnehem, and in order to give them a shorter march to the trenches the Glasgows changed over with them, returning to Bethune next morning. The weather had broken by 2nd November when, through torrents of rain, the battalion marched into support at Cambrin. The trenches had got into a deplorable condition, and each day three companies went up to work at clearing the long communication trenches of the sticky mud, which had made them almost inaccessible.

The Glasgows' turn in the line came round, and they relieved the Oxfords in sub-section Z2, south of the la Basse road. The weather had improved, but a lot of work still had to be done to make the trenches habitable for the winter. Large numbers of duckboards were brought up and laid down, with gutters below to draw off the water. Possibly the enemy saw something of this activity, for his guns were very active. No 2 Company which occupied a salient had a particularly bad time; its line was continually shelled. There were some casualties and one or two deep dug-outs were destroyed.

Lieut. McCosh, who had resumed duty with the trench mortars, was in this storm centre. One of his men was in a dugout when it was blown in, and was buried and badly crushed. In spite of heavy shells which continued to burst all round, McCosh succeeded in digging him out and saving his life.

On being relieved the battalion moved back to Annezin, a suburb of Bethune, spending one night at Beuvry on the way. On the 16th Major-General W.G. Walker, VC, who had just succeeded General Home in command of the 2nd Division, inspected the battalion. The weather was wet and cold, the billets were neither rain nor wind proof, and we were quite glad to move into the line again. The 5th Brigade had now three battalions in the line astride the canal two south and one north of it. The Glasgows' position was the brickstacks sector in the centre. Owing to the numerical weakness of the battalion it was necessary to put three companies in the front line. The sector was the key to our line south of the canal, and for that reason was a particularly lively one. On the right and centre the opposing front lines approached very near each other, no-man's land being filled with mine craters. These had saps leading out to them, and from the sap-heads a fairly continual exchange of bombs was kept up. In addition, minnies and rifle grenades came over at all hours of the day and night.

It was common gossip that at Jerusalem Hill on the right, the enemy had a mine almost ready

to go up. At this point at least, our miners admitted that the Germans were masters of the situation underground. The front line here was raised on the lip of a great crater, behind was the important Cuinchy Keep, with a brickstack at each corner. The Commanding Officer was careful that as far as possible companies should each have their fair share of the unpleasant places. When last in the line No.2 Company had had the heaviest casualties, so it was detailed for the support position. No.4 was given the left next the canal, where no-man's land was a reasonable breadth. The centre and right therefore fell to Nos.1 and 3. The question was — which was to sit on top of the mine? As a fair way of deciding, a coin was tossed. No.1 Company won — and chose Jerusalem Hill.

It turned out that No.1 Company Commander wanted the right for himself, but thought that the other wanted the centre. Both thought that the death rate from trench mortars and rifle-grenades would be heavier in the centre, and preferred the sporting chance of the mine not going up the practical certainty of a lot of casualties from these causes.

The battalion reached the trenches in the afternoon and took over during a snowstorm. There had already been keen frost, and that night it froze hard again. The ground was like iron, which made the chances of attack greater, for the usual soft mud of no-man's land was in itself an obstacle. The hard ground also gave greater effect to shell-fire. Practically no work could be done and the problem was how to keep the men warm. Drying rooms were instituted in some of the larger dug-outs, which were kept hot by several braziers. Relays of men came in and got their clothes dried and their bodies warmed. Had it not been for these — and for rum — the battalion would have lost a lot of men from the intense cold.

In the matter of rum, our weak numbers told in our favour, because the rum ration, for some reason was issued according to establishment and not, as in the case of other rations, according to actual strength. In this way our account with the powers that were was made more even; on particularly cold nights one might have admitted that the balance was in our favours.

As was expected, lots of trench mortar bombs and showers of rifle grenades fell along the front line, Erickfield Terrace and Oxford Street, as well as on the many communication trenches. No.1 Company got most of them and had several killed and wounded. On the right No.1 had an anxious time, treading lightly along the front line at Jerusalem Hill. Sentry posts here were reduced to a minimum, but the position had to be held, and all that could be done was to make the tours of duty short.

The four days passed — slowly for the platoons which successively held the hallowed ground — without incident beyond rather more than the usual number of casualties, and on November 30th the 2nd Worcesters took over.

After the relief the battalion was dispersed: No.1 Company went into huts at Beuvry, No.2 into the various support points behind the brickstacks, Has.) and 4 and Headquarters into billets in Harley Street. The frost had gone and the weather turned wet. The four days in brigade reserve were occupied with work parties and mining fatigues.

On December 4th the battalion took over the right sub-section A1 of the brigade front, south of the la Basse road. With the thaw and heavy rain the trenches had again got into a perfectly hopeless state. It was a matter of hours getting along the C.T. from Cambrin to the front line. Nos.1 and 2 Companies each had two platoons in the front line and two in support in Oxford Street. The conditions in front were almost beyond description. Even the fire-steps were under water in many cases. There were no dug-outs, and the rain fell in torrents. Oxford Street had deep dug-outs but it was a matter of difficulty preventing them from being filled with liquid mud from the trench.

Platoons changed over after twelve hours, for sleep in the front line was quite impossible. A large party of Worcesters came up to help to clear the communication trenches.

The patrols in no-man's land even had difficulty in getting about. The Boche opposite were quieter than usual, probably because their attention, like ours, was concentrated on the fight against nature.

After 48 hours, companies changed over, and the weather improved. When we were relieved by the Queens, and marched back to Bethune, we had the satisfaction of knowing that we left the trenches in better condition than we found them.

Next day Lieutenant-Colonel C.C. Murray, CMG, handed over the command of the battalion

to Lieutenant-Colonel J.C. Stormonth Darling, DSO. Colonel Murray during his period of command, which had included over a year in France, had done much to endear himself to all ranks. Under him the discipline was almost as perfect as discipline could be, but it was not of the Prussian variety; one obeyed him naturally, without thinking that one had to do so. No one understood the Glasgow Highlanders better than he; no one did more to foster the 'esprit de corps' which was our mainstay. He went home to take command of our own 3rd line battalion, where a C.O. with war experience was required, so his influence was not altogether lost, but we parted from him with genuine regret.

Colonel Darling had been serving since August 1914 as adjutant of the 2nd Scottish Rifles, and the one thing which reconciled us to the loss of our old C.O. was the personality and character of his successor. At once he inspired the same loyalty which had been accorded to Colonel Murray — it would have been a poor compliment to the latter if this had not been so. The day after the change over of the command, the Glasgow Highlanders marched back to the trenches. Each company as it passed him, gave a last salute to Colonel Murray. The battalion now occupied B1, the sub-section immediately north of the canal, which had been its home for so long during the previous winter and in the weeks preceding the Battle of Loos. We hardly recognised our beautiful trenches when we got into them. Duckboards floated about in the front line, C.T's were filled with mud, and the dug-outs, where they had not fallen in were half-full of water. Strathcona Walk, the second line, was completely flooded, the entrances to its deep dug-outs being out of sight.

Nos.1 and 2 Companies took over the line for the first two days. No.15 occupied the strong points, and No.4 was in reserve at le Preol. The enemy guns were active and caused a few casualties. After a company change-over at half-time, an uneventful and uncomfortable spell came to an end and we handed over to the 17th Royal Fusiliers, a battalion belonging to the 33rd. New Army Division, which had lately landed in France.

The following four days were spent in support, then the battalion took over A1 sub-section once more, that is, the right of the brigade front on the la Bassee road.

It was intended that raiding parties assisted by gas should go over from A1 and A2 on the first favourable night. The 2nd H.L.I. was the other battalion concerned. In the afternoon the special gas company. came up, and throughout the day our guns bombarded the enemy's trenches and cut his wire. No.4 Company, which was in reserve in Harley Street, detailed a raiding party of fifty. The wind, however, was unfavourable and the raids were postponed. The 19th was a quiet day, a draft of fifty men arrived, which however, only brought companies up to an average strength of 100 rifles.

Next day the raids were ordered again, and zero hour was fixed for 10 p.m. The raiders were in position at nine o'clock and everything was ready except the wind. Zero was postponed till midnight, but at that hour the wind was still unfavourable, so once again the raids were postponed. With praiseworthy perseverance, Army, Corps, Division or Brigade — whichever was responsible — ordered them again for the night of the 21st.

At last the wind was in the right direction and the gas was projected at 8 p.m.. The raiders were to go over at 8.15. At five minutes past, the enemy opened heavy machine gun fire and rifle fire, a few minutes later his guns put down a barrage. When time was up these were still going strong. It was perfectly obvious that the gas had not been effective and that the raid had no chance of success. Colonel Darling accordingly decided to keep the men in the trenches. Conditions at the brickstacks had been the same, and the 2nd H.L.I. had not advanced either. About nine o'clock the firing died down, and a patrol which went out reported that the Boche, in spite of their dose of gas were as merry as sandboys in their front line.

The Oxforas took over next day, and after 48 hours in Annequin the battalion went into the brickstacks on Christmas eve. This relief had to be done after dark and over the open, as the C.T'S were flooded. It was by no means an easy operation to find one's way in the black night through the labyrinth of the Cuinchy trenches. Companies were strung out in single file as they worked there way forward over ditches on single-plank bridges, winding in and out among the shell-holes; the only light cast on the scene being from the bursts of enemy shells. Very strict orders had been issued forbidding any form of truce on Christmas Day, and if anything the guns were more active than usual. The trenches were in a very bad state, part of the front line could not be occupied and

the whole 500 yards of front was held by five weak platoons, Jerusalem Hill had not yet been blown up, but it was still under grave suspicion.

On December 28th the battalion was relieved by the 2nd Argylls, and moved back to Annequin; the following night was spent at Gonneheul, whence a march to St. Hilaire took it right away from the war. Here the noise of battle was reduced to a murmur, and at night only faint flashes could be seen along the eastern horizon. The 2nd Division was out of the line for the first time for seven months.

New Year 1916 was brought in amid more festive surroundings than had been possible a year before in the trenches at Richebourg. The inhabitants gazed open-mouthed at our proceedings. The pipe band, followed by a torchlight procession, marched up and down the street. No one turned in till after midnight, and if any of the hard-worked French peasants tried to sleep, their efforts were probably unavailing. Certain very strict regulations as to the use of the liquid appropriate to the occasion were suspended for the time being. It is to the credit of the G.H. that this privilege was not abused — although perhaps the limitation of the supply helped considerably. Next day the New Year Dinner was as good and ample as gifts from home and extra supplies from Bethune could make it.

The rest at St. Hilaire was the first real chance the battalion had had of smartening itself up for months, and full advantage was taken of it.

Col. Fleming's inspections of companies were remembered for many a day. At this time Capt. George Wingate left the battalion, having received the appointment of second-in-Command of the 2nd Line under Colonel W.G. Fleming. Capt. Warren succeeded to the command of No.2 Company.

The rest came to an end, and the Highlanders marched to billets in le Choquax. During eight days very large mining fatigues were supplied. These were carried to and from the line in motor lorries. On the 19th four men were killed by the explosion of an enemy counter-mine. The 5th Brigade took over the line at Festubert on 26th January, the Highlanders going into support. the village line. Two days later the battalion was relieved unexpectedly and marched to billets in Essars.

We could not at first understand this move, for the remainder of the brigade were still in the line. To explain what had happened it is necessary to go back to November. During that month a process of intermixing the 2nd and 33rd Divisions had commenced. The 19th and 99th Brigades changed places. Then two battalions in each brigade were exchanged. The 5th Brigade lost the 1st Queens. And the 2nd Worcesters, receiving in exchange two new army battalions, the 17th and 24th Royal Fusiliers. So far all was well, the G.H. it appeared, were to remain in the 2nd Division. Then in January the blow fell. Owing to the systematic way the battalion had been starved of reinforcements, it had been doing its full share of the work with, perhaps, an average strength of about two-thirds of that of the other units. This state of affairs could only be explained in one of two ways — either the army authorities really intended to destroy the Territorial Force, or their organization for drafting was hopelessly bad. In either case they were guilty of the greatest ingratitude to territorials who had prepared themselves for the country's service before the war broke out. When the 5th Brigade took over the line at Festubert the Brigadier had told Col. Darling that his battalion would be in support for the whole eight days, because it would involve too much disorganization to put it into the front line in its weak state. The position was unsatisfactory to the brigade-commander and unfair to the battalion. We were not the only battalion involved, for the 6th and 99th Brigades also lost their territorials the 1st Rerte and the 5th King's Liverpools. Major-General Walker inspected the battalion and in his farewell speech thanked all ranks for their unfailing devotion to duty, their steadiness in battle, and the enthusiastic way they had worked. He said that it was only for a time that the Glasgow Highlanders were being withdrawn from the firing line, and that before long they would come again with full ranks.

By this time we had learned that we were being taken back for a spell of duty on the lines of communication. This meant safety, but although no man likes to be shot at, we would have preferred to remain in the line, rather than retire —even for a time — among the highly paid consumers of strawberry jam and marmalade. The attitude of the subalterns was little short of mutinous — Teddy McCosh, Tom Burton and Terry Todd announced that they were going to

provide themselves with scoop caps and corduroy trousers, in order to be properly equipped for their new duties.

Col. Darling received many letters from the commanding officers of other units in the Division regretting our departure. This feeling was mutual, for we had always got on well with them all, particularly with the 2nd. H.L.I. However, it was decreed that the infantry of the 2nd Division was to be half regular and half new army, and there was no help for it.

Next morning the Glasgow Highlanders marched to Bethune to entrain. General Gough was at the station along with General Walker. The band of the 2nd Division played the battalion through the town. Capt. Frame, as entraining officer had everything in readiness, and the battalion took exactly one minute to get into the train. After the usual delay, without which it would have been unseemly for a French troop-train to start, the journey to St. Omer commenced.

St. Omer was G.H.Q. In December Sir John French had been succeeded by Sir Douglas Haig as Commander-in-Chief. The battalion was immediately split up, to relieve the 13th Sth. London Regiment (Kensington Rifles) in some thirty posts along the lines of communication. The size of these varied from three officers and sixty other ranks to one N.C.O. and three men; and the duties from guards at important railheads, over tons of ammunition, to a single sentry post at a wayside station. All sorts of Government property was under the care of the battalion & ammunition, food, stores of all kinds, and German prisoners. When the relief was complete the Kensington entrained for the fighting line, being played to the station by our pipe band

The distribution of the battalion was as follows: No.1 Company on the Hazebrouck—Ypres line with its most forward post at Poperinghe, Capt. Reid's headquarters being at Abeele (Ammunition Railhead); No.2 on the Bailleul—Armentieres line, Capt. Warren's headquarters at Strazeele (Ammunition Railhead) No.3 St. Omer district; No.4 on the Bethune line with Capt. Frame at Aire. Some of the posts were within range of the German guns, and enemy aeroplanes often tried to bomb the ammunition dumps — especially in the early morning —but after the trenches the life seemed thoroughly peaceful. The C.O paid periodic visits to companies by motor car, and company-commanders visited their various posts regularly on horseback or by train. The companies were under the commandants of the different sections of the L. of C. for discipline and administration.

Schools of instruction for N.C.O.'s were organized at St. Omer and run on 'Guards' lines by Sergeant-Major Lewis. Col. Sprout was in charge at St. Omer.

A letter was received from Col. Murray forwarding one that had been addressed to him by Lieutenant-General U.S. Horn.. Our old divisional commander wrote as follows:

I want to thank you and all ranks of the Glasgow for all the good work and gallant fighting which you have done under my command. I regard your fine battalion as in the same class as regular battalions, and I do not think I can pay you a higher compliment than to say that you have justified my confidence. You have established a great record, and will add to it before the war is over. You may feel proud of yourselves, and am sure your country is proud of you. I wish you all good fortune and I hope we may be associated again some day soon.

26th March the Italian Commander-in-Chief visited G.H.Q. The Glasgow Highlanders furnished a guard of honour at the station. General Cadorna inspected the guard while the pipe band played on the platform. Sir Douglas Haig congratulated Capt. A.L Menzies, who was in command, on the turn out.

The G.H. had a visitor of their own in May, when the Lord Lieutenant of the County of the City of Glasgow, who had done so much for the battalion the previous summer, came to St. Omer. Several drafts had already arrived and there were 300 men on parade. After the inspection and march past Sir Thomas Dunlop addressed the battalion, saying how the citizens of the city had been watching its doings with pride. While he was speaking a German aeroplane put in an appearance, but was shelled off before it could do any damage.

On May 9th we lost our adjutant, Captain S. Acklom, MC, H.L.I., who went to take up the duties of 2nd-in-command of the 22nd Northumberland Fusiliers (3rd Tyneside Scottish). Capt. Acklom was a keen and popular officer and a very gallant soldier. Lieut. Frank Donald was appointed adjutant in his place.

During this spell of duty on the lines of communication, sport was not neglected, each detachment had its football, and the battalion team maintained an unbeaten record. The Guards Division came to St. Omer for a rest, and one of its battalions did succeed in beating us.

The promise that had been given us of getting back to the fighting line was fulfilled on 23rd May, when the 1st (Garrison) Bn. the Hampshire Regiment arrived in St. Omer to take over our duties. The reliefs of the various posts were started the same day, and practically completed the following evening, when the Battalion was again concentrated — and at full strength for the first time since November 1914. The numbers were 55 officers and 1006 other ranks.

In many respects the battalion was in the highest state of efficiency it had ever reached. The systematic training it had had, especially of the N.C.O's, the war experience of all the senior officers and N.C.O's and of a considerable proportion of the men, the moral and physical effects of three months' rest; all these counted for a great deal. On the other hand the enthusiasm of the early days was perhaps lacking; war was no longer an adventure, battles were not glorious — they were the most terrible ordeals that the mind of man could imagine. On 26th May the transport moved off by road to Bethune, stopping for one night at St. Hilaire.

Next morning the battalion fell in, and was marched down to St. Omer station by the drums and fifes of the 3rd Coldstream Guards. Guardsmen lined the road giving us a great send-off. Even they themselves could scarcely have been better turned out. Equipment was perfect, metal parts shining, and webbing khakied, packs square. Thus after three months of peace, the Glasgow Highlanders returned to the trenches with the certain prospect of hard fighting before many weeks were past.

There were rumours of an impending German attack in the neighbourhood of Loos, and as the 100th was in support to that part of the line, Col. Darling and the four company-commanders made a reconnaissance of the trenches. In going over the positions which the Germans had occupied previous to the battle, it was interesting to observe how thoroughly they had overlooked the trenches the battalion had occupied in June 1915.

Major-General Landon inspected the battalion, and complimented Col. Darling on the turnout — as well he might. On the 9th June the brigade went into the line, the Highlanders being in support at Annequin South. After four days we relieved the Worcesters in Auchy Right sector. We had held this position, which was just north of the Hohenzollern Redoubt, during the Battle of Loos. Moe. 1, 2, and 4 Companies were in front, with headquarters and support platoons in the second line, No. 3 being in reserve. There was a good deal of shell-fire, and steady exchanges of trench mortar bombs and rifle grenades, from which causes we had several casualties. The second night one of our wiring parties lost one man killed and two wounded early next morning an enemy mine went up on our front, but did little or no damage. On the evening of the 16th the Worcesters took over and we moved back to Annequin South. We now heard definitely that the long expected British 1916 offensive, which was to be the beginning of the end of the war, was not going to take place on our front, but away to the south on the Somme. The concentration of troops was already in progress, and as a result our line was in process of being thinned. Each unit was now to hold a greatly extended front when in the line, and when out of it, would be required to do double work to keep the mines going.

Chapter 9

THE MAD POINT RAID

The winter and spring had been a period of comparative quietness on the British front, no great effort having been made by either side after the British offensive at Loos had died down. Such fighting as had taken place had been chiefly on the 2nd Army's front, when Canadian and British troops had striven for the somewhat doubtful advantage of the possession of the famous St. Eloi craters.

The principal change in the tactics of trench warfare that had taken place during the Glasgow Highlanders' absence was the development of raiding. The battalion had taken part in one of the early trench raids at Duck's Bill in February 1915, but till after the Battle of Loos this form of aggression was not much practised. They had however, proved a popular form of amusement among the colonial troops, and now the higher command could not have enough of them. Besides the effect on the enemy's morale, the crop of prisoners they yielded formed part of the raw material of our intelligence department. Raids were supposed to foster the offensive spirit; they undoubtedly did so — when successful.

The Glasgow Highlanders left St. Omer at 10.40a.m. on 29th May, arrived in Bethune at 10p.m. the same day, and marched to billets at Annequin. We were posted to the 100th Brigade, 33rd Division, and replaced the 6th Scottish Rifles. This division and our old one had been intermingled, so we were among old acquaintances. Brigadier-General A.W.F. Baird, DSO, (Gordon Highlanders) commanded the brigade, and the other battalions were the 1st Queens, 2nd Worcesters, and 16th King's Royal Rifles. Major-General H.J.S. Landon, CB,CMG, commanded the division.

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The battalion took over the new Cuinchy Right sector, a two battalion frontage comprising old Auchy Right and Left. Nos. 1, 2, and 3 Companies went into the front line, each could only afford one platoon for support, and even then the front line was very lightly held.

There was normal activity till about midnight 21st / 22nd, when great commotion was caused by an unusually violent explosion. So great was the concussion that those in the support line thought the enemy had blown a mine on our front; it was at Duck's Bill however. Nevertheless, all the guns on both sides were soon hard at it. No.1 Company lost eight wounded, including Capt. Reid. Before daylight all was quiet again. Capt. T. H. H. Warren was posted to No. 1 to take command.

The next night we blew a mine at Twin Craters, near Mine Point; the lip of the crater was consolidated by Nos.2 and 3 Companies. Several brisk bomb encounters took place, and among one at least

of the enemy work parties, considerable execution was done.

On the evening of 23rd we handed over to the Worcesters and moved back to Annequin South. No sooner had companies reached their billets than an order was issued detailing large parties to report at once to the Royal Engineers for tunnelling — the promise of extra work was being fulfilled.

The battalion was ordered to carry out a raid on the night of 27th / 28th June. The honour of being chosen for this important duty fell to No. 4 Company (Capt. A.C. Frame). The object was: 'To advance to the German second line behind Mad Point, and hold this for 60 minutes, to enable old and new craters to be examined and any mine destroyed.' Also to get as many live prisoners as possible, and any other articles, and to do damage to defences and dug-outs.

Mad Point was a bulge in the German front line with two craters in front of it, a short distance north of the Hohenzollern Redoubt, and in front of our new Cuinchy Right sector. Trench maps and aeroplane photographs were carefully examined, and a plan of the trenches was marked out in a field near the billets, where the company carried out rehearsals both by day and by night; every section doing its allotted task, and each man his particular little bit.

Lantern slides of the area were exhibited in one of the billets, and the whole operation was thoroughly explained to everyone concerned. Minute instructions were issued for co-operation by artillery, machine guns and trench mortars, a telephone code was arranged — in short, General Baird, Col. Darling, and Capt. Frame did everything that forethought could suggest to provide against all eventualities, and arranged the plan down to the last detail. The password was 'Sauchiehall'.

On the forenoon of the 26th the Brigadier inspected No.4 Company, and said a final few words of encouragement. That night the battalion went into the line. At 11.30 p.m. our guns bombarded Man Point. This was for the double purpose of wire cutting and accustoming the Germans to the idea of a sudden night bombardment. In the morning observations were made of gaps in the wire, and Lewis guns trained on the places, so that as soon as it was dark they might be kept under fire to prevent repairs.

During the day the equipment of the raiding parties completed. Among the special stores were 660 bombs, 150 sandbags, 8 heavy wire-cutters, 27 electric torches, 3 guiding tapes and 2 telephone instruments, complete with wires. All unnecessary equipment was discarded, and special care was taken that no one should have anything about him to jingle. Zero hour was fixed at 11.30 p.m.

At eleven o'clock the raiders, who were divided into three equal parties, crept out. The sky was overcast and the night was very dark, and quiet. No. 1 Party under 2nd Lieut. J.C. MacNab used the Sally Port, a short sap on the right. It consisted of three sections, the leading one made up of 2 bombers, 2 bayonet men (bombers), 2 bomb carriers, and 8 bayonet men. The support section was the same in composition, with the addition of 3 men with pickaxes and 1 man with a shovel. The rear section had 3 bomb carriers, 4 bayonet men (for prisoners), 4 bayonet men. (for machine guns), 3 destroyers (carrying patent explosive boxes) and 1 man laying out tape to show the way back.

No.2 Party under 2nd Lieut. W.W. Paterson used No.1 sap in the centre, and No.3 Party under 2nd. Lieut. D.S. Marchant No.2 sap on the left. These parties were the same strength and composition as No.1. Captain Frame's headquarters' party was 2 buglers, 2 telephonists, and 3 runners. The total strength of the raid was 4 officers and 148 other ranks, to which was attached a miners' party of 1 officer, 1 N.C.O. and 4 men, whose duty it was to demolish any mineshaft found. Lieut. R.C. MacLelland was posted in No.2 sap with a telephone, and with him was Major W.R. Bennett, R.F.A., forward artillery control officer.

At ten minutes past eleven Lieut. MacLelland 'phoned back "Can I have leave?" (Party going out), five minutes later "10 days" (All quiet), and just before zero "Destination Glasgow" (Party all out and ready). At 11.30 a large mine was exploded at Railway Crater, some distance to the left — to mislead the enemy as to our intention — and smoke was sent over by No.3 Company on the left. At the same time a hurricane bombardment was opened on the German front line and craters. Meanwhile the raiders were lying out in no-man's land, each party and section in its correct relative position. Thanks to the darkness, and the silent way they had moved, they had not apparently been either seen or heard by the enemy, and it was unnecessary to use the only code word no one wanted to hear — "Damn!" (Think the enemy have spotted party).

The bombardment lasted exactly three minutes. The guns then lifted and put down a 'box barrage' round the affected area. At the same moment a small mine was blown at Mad Point. Immediately the leading section rushed forward, through dust and smoke and falling debris. This was the only point where

the strict letter of the orders was not carried out. The assault had been timed for zero plus 4 minutes, but the precipitation of the attack by one minute was more than justified, because only two men were slightly hurt by the falling debris, and the charge taking place when it did — almost simultaneously with the explosion — made the surprise more complete, and gave not a moment to the Germans to recover their wits.

Nos. 1 and 2 parties broke through the gaps in the wire in front of the craters. They encountered some loose 'concertina' wire, but quickly brushed it aside. The craters were empty, but in the centre of each was a mineshaft, and eight prisoners were captured in the galleries. Lieut. MacNab's party, keeping to the right rushed into the German front line, bayoneting all opposition, and started work along the trench towards the second line, at which they arrived. after doing considerable execution among the garrison. A bombing post was established to hold up any counter-attack from the south, and the support party proceeded to work along the second line towards the left.

Lieut. Paterson led his party through the large crater and so into the trenches, bombing and bayoneting down the communication trench 'till he established himself in the second line to wait for No. 1, party, using his support to work along towards the left.

Meanwhile, Lieut. Marchant's party had broken. through a gap in the wire on the left, overcame all opposition, and made its way down the left communication trench forming posts in the front and second lines to stop bombing attacks from the north.

In all cases men were left behind to guard deep dug-outs, the rear sections of each party having the duty of looking after the front line, Capt. Frame established his headquarters in one of the craters, and before long he got reports that the three parties had joined hands in the second line and established the flanks, This was done by pulling down the sides of the trenches to form barricades, and using the 150 sandbags for building.

Thus all the objectives had been taken and the German first and second lines were in our hands on a frontage of 120 yards and a depth of about 85. The enemy had put up quite a fair resistance, ten of them were killed, and about twice as many wounded. But the object of the raid was not so much to kill Boches as to catch them. Some were taken in the trenches, others were extracted from dug-outs. Lieut. MacNab went along shouting "Kamerad" into the entrances, and in most cases the occupants were quite willing to surrender, In others the dug-outs had to be bombed, As the prisoners were gathered in, they were escorted over no-man's land,

At midnight a second mine was put up on the left. This had the effect of drawing the enemy's shell-fire in that direction, It helped the raiders, but was not so satisfactory from No. 3 Company's point of view, The barrage on their trenches was redoubled, and the company lost one man killed and another wounded. Considering the intensity of the fire these casualties were very light, but the trenches were being very thinly held, and needless to say full advantage was being taken of all the cover available.

The enemy made no organized attempt to counter-attack during our hour's occupation of his territory. Possibly the mine explosions on the left, and our general bombardment, made it difficult for him to realise what we were about. Our 'box barrage' too, must have made it very difficult for his local troops to do anything. His guns, however, kept up a wild bombardment all the time,

The miners meantime had been at work on their demolitions, and everything was in readiness for the withdrawal. It had been laid down that the signal for the evacuation of the second line would be a 'G' sounded on the bugle. The word "retire" was on no account to be used; if necessary, "C.I." was to be the command Further, the No. 3 sections in the front line and craters were not on any account to retire till the forward section had rejoined. At half-past twelve the signals were given, all the parties were collected, and on the final signal, "long-short-long" whistle blasts, the whole raid — less the men who had already gone back with prisoners and material — recrossed no-man's land, No sooner was the last man clear of Mad Point than three explosions were heard, two being the mine-shafts in the craters and the third a bomb store, no-man's land was under shell-fire, but the whole company got back safely, the total casualties being 11 wounded, all but one comparatively slightly.

The enemy's losses were heavy, they comprised 38 unwounded prisoners, 9 wounded prisoners, 1 officer killed (papers secured), 10 other ranks killed and 7 wounded — these were known for certain — and an unknown number killed and wounded in dug-outs. Two machine guns were brought back, a number of rifles, smoke helmets, steel helmets, and other loot, including a quantity of mining timber —

the Jocks probably thought it good business to secure wood that was at hand, and so save a long carry from Cambrin! Two mine-shafts and a bomb store had been blown up. The prisoners belonged to the 242nd Reserve Regiment (Saxons), the 23rd Regiment (Bavarians), and the 19th Pioneer Regiment. Among those taken was a cadet officer.

After the raid No.4 Company went back to the reserve trenches, where it was worried by shelling, but suffered no loss. The firing gradually died down along the whole front, and by half-past two conditions were 'normal' again. Rain was falling heavily, but probably in the cold grey dawn on June 28th 1916 there were in France no people better pleased with themselves than those weary, wet and muddy Highlanders.

There was soon plenty of evidence that others were pleased with them too. Shortly after one o' clock in the morning Colonel Darling received a message from General Baird, who had himself done so much to made the raid a success:

'Heartiest congratulations to you and all ranks on your splendid success, which has exceeded all expectations. Please tell Frame, his officers, N.C.O.'s and men that I am more than delighted and proud of them.'

In the morning the 53rd Division wired:

'Convey to Glasgow Highlanders Major-General's appreciation and congratulations.'

Later General Haking (11th Corps) wired:

Corps Commander sends heartiest congratulations to troops 9th H.L.I. who took part in very successful raid last night, He is delighted with the excellent work done.'

In the afternoon a wire was received from General Sir Charles Munro (1st Army):

'Army Commander wishes his congratulations conveyed to 9th H. L. I. for successful raid last night.'

and in the evening Sir Douglas Haig wired:

'Commander-in-Chief wishes his congratulations conveyed to 9th H.L.I. in the creditable achievement night of 27.6.16.'

This one completed the chain of command, but many others were received.

The old 2nd Division said: 'Well done Glasgows.'

5th Brigade: 'Hearty congratulations on Good Show from your old Brigade.'

6th Brigade, which had given No.4 Company its first lesson in raiding, wired: 'Well done Glasgow Highlanders.'

Colonel Darling's old brigade the 19th wired to General Baird.: 'Congratulations to you and Glasgow Highlanders, Brigadier sends special ones to Colonel Darling.'

Messages were also received from 1st Queens, 2nd Worcesters, 2nd Argylls and others,

The day and night following the raid were lively. During the afternoon the enemy blew up a mine near 'Midnight Crater' — ours on the left on the night of the raid — killing a sentry and damaging our saps. No.3 Company got quickly to work repairing the damage. At night another German mine went up on No.3 Company's front, which did a good deal of damage although fifty yards away. Capt. Menzies' Company sapped out and consolidated the near lip of the crater.

In the early morning, one of his patrols having discovered a large German working party behind a crater, with a covering party in front, he got the guns on to them — with excellent results. That afternoon the battalion was relieved by the 2nd Worcesters and went into billets in Annequin South.

A day or two later, a copy of a communication issued by 11th Corps to 53rd Division was received:

XI Corps

53rd Division.

H.H.S. 676/55.

In forwarding your report on the raid carried out by the 9th Highland Light Infantry the Corps Commander has written as follows to the First Army:

'This is the most successful of the 40 raids carried out by the Corps since we came into this part of the line in November last. It was carried out by a Territorial Battalion that had only just joined the Division and in my opinion reflects the greatest credit on all concerned. Both the G.O.C., 33rd Division and the G.O.C. 100th Infantry brigade took the greatest pains to ensure that every detail was thought out and provided for beforehand, and the gallant and determined manner in which the operation was carried out by the 9th Bn. Highland Light Infantry (Glasgow Highlanders) will be a great encouragement to

other units. Col, Darling who commanded the Battalion & Captain Frame who commanded the raid deserve great credit for inspiring their officers and men with a fine offensive spirit.'

(Sgd.) W.H. Anderson,

B.G.G.S.

XICorps.

30th June 1916.

On 3rd July the 98th Brigade took over the line, the 2nd Argylls relieving the Highlanders who marched to Bethune, arriving at the Montmorency Barracks about midnight. In the morning Major-General Landon visited the battalion and inspected No.4 Company, complimenting Capt. Frame and his men very highly. This was followed by an inspection of the battalion next day by Lieutenant-General Haking, who also spoke in very flattering terms, recalling the fact that he had been in command of the 5th Brigade when we had joined it in 1914.

Our raid had been officially reported in the press as one of the most successful that had ever been carried out, and as the work of one of the battalions of the Highland Light Infantry, but very much more important events had followed almost immediately, for the great Somme offensive began on 1st July. We heard of the fine advance our troops had made, but that they had been held up, and had suffered terrible losses. It did not therefore come as a surprise when on the 6th we received orders to hold ourselves in readiness to move, probably that evening.

The move was postponed for twenty-four hours however, and this enabled the battalion to take part in a parade for the presentation of British and French medals, which was held in the Grande Place, Bethune on the afternoon of 7th July. Two companies were present; turned out a la St. Omer. Sir Charles Munro warmly congratulated the battalion, saying he was proud of it.

The following were presented with the Military Medal for their gallantry during the raid:

No.1457 Sergt. W. Homer,

No.2151 Sergt. A. Bennett,

No.2592 Sergt. W.R. Douglas,

No.1458 L/Sergt. J.McCaig,

No.1676 L/Corpl. J.R. Wallace,

No.2952 L/Corpl. W. McFarlane,

No.5255 .Pte. W. Falconer,

No.1626 Pte. J. Hardie,

No.1480 Bugler a. Johnston,

No.1616 Bugler G.Kerr.

An order was issued that evening:

After Order by Lieut. Col. J.C. Stormonth Darling, Commanding Glasgow Highlanders,

July 7th 1916.

The following letter has been received by the Commanding Officer, from the Lord Provost of Glasgow, dated 3rd instant:

Sir Douglas Haig has sent me a most charming letter telling me of the brilliant work done by your battalion during the night of June 27th, when you brought back 46 prisoners and two machine guns besides destroying some mineshafts during your tour of the enemy trenches. Will you allow me, not only on own behalf but on behalf of the citizens of Glasgow, to congratulate you and your battalion most heartily on this notable feat, which is quite in keeping with the traditions of the Glasgow Highlanders and other troops from this city.

We always knew that when the opportunity occurred they would discharge with efficiency and distinction the task entrusted to them. We are proud of the Glasgow Highlanders and of what they have done, and feel sure that in the future they will display the same gallantry and courage as in the past.

With kind regards and best wishes, Yours very truly,

(Sgd.) Thomas Dunlop.

(Sgd.) W.F.M. Donald,

Adj. Glasgow Highlanders.

Chapter 10

HIGH WOOD, JULY 1916

In December 1915 Anzac and Suvla were evacuated, and in January 1916 the Gallipoli adventure came to an end, when Cape Helles also was abandoned. The evacuations, which were carried out on the advice of our old divisional General Sir Charles Munro, were an admission of the failure of the flank attack on the Central Powers, and more than ever it was obvious that the war would have to be won on the Western Front.

The Central Powers had reason to fear great simultaneous allied offensives on the Western and Eastern Fronts, for then their interior lines would avail them little. The Germans seized the initiative and attacked Verdun towards the end of February. Their infantry advance was prepared for by artillery bombardments of unprecedented intensity. While the French were doggedly holding their attenuated positions round Verdun, the Austrians in May launched their attack in the Trentino and made good progress. In order to relieve the pressure on Italy, Brusilov early in June started his spectacular drive in Galicia. As a result of the Russian success, German troops were sent from the Western to the Eastern front, but the pressure on Verdun was kept up. Such was the situation in June.

The Glasgow Highlanders were in front of la Bassee when the Somme offensive started on 1st July, but as news of the battle came through, it was obvious that before long the 33rd Division would be drawn into the maelstrom. Immediately after the parade in the Grande Place, Bethune, the battalion marched out of the town, which since Christmas 1914 had almost been its second home.

The next day was spent at la Vallee, where kits were inspected and final preparations made for marching and fighting. At two o'clock in the morning it marched to Lillers and entrained for Saleux, arriving there about mid-day. Orders were issued to proceed to Vaux, but after four miles of the march had been done, counter-orders directed the battalion to Vecquemont, in a contrary direction. The consequence was that we did not reach the billets till nine o'clock in the evening, after much unnecessary marching in the heat of the afternoon.

Vecquemont lies seven miles east of Amiens, and here the battalion remained standing by 'till 6a.m. on the 11th, when it moved forward to Moriancourt about four miles south of Albert. The 33rd Division was now in Lieutenant-General H.S. Horne's XV Corps, which was part of General Sir Henry S. Rawlinson's Fourth Army.

On the 12th the 100th Brigade was concentrated in the Becordel - Becourt area. This was just behind the old line, from which the great attack had started. About a mile and a half to the east lay Fricourt, which had been taken on the 2nd by the 7th Division. Beyond Fricourt a valley ran in a north-easterly direction to the top of the ridge at Bois de Foureaux or High Wood, about five miles away. The Fourth Army had been struggling up these slopes for the last fortnight.

On the morning of the 14th the enemy positions from Longueval to Bazentin-le-Petit were attacked. The assaulting divisions formed up in the dark in front of the enemy's trenches and attacked at 3.25 a.m. just before dawn. At three o'clock that morning the Glasgow Highlanders stood ready to move from Becordel-Becourt.

All morning the battle raged along the ridge about five miles away, at 11 a.m. we were ordered to move forward to Fricourt. In the evening a further move was made to Flatiron Copse, which lies in the valley east of Mametz Wood. This was in the area captured during the morning's advance. The day's fighting had been successful, and all the ground won had been held against counterattacks.

On our front the 3rd and 7th Divisions had cleared Bazentin-le-Grand and Bazentin-le-Petit, and the 21st had captured Bazentin-le-Petit Wood. Such good progress had in fact been made that during the afternoon it was decided to exploit the success and the 7th Division was ordered to occupy High Wood, with a small force of cavalry in cooperation.

When the Highlanders reached Flatiron Copse at eight o'clock in the evening, Colonel Darling received orders to move forward and dig in on a line from the western corner of High Wood along the road towards Bazentin-le-Petit, joining with the 1st Queens who were to prolong the left as far as the cross-roads immediately north of that village. High Wood. was reported to be in our hands. On receipt of

these orders the Colonel, who was given general charge of the whole operation, went forward to reconnoitre the ground, leaving Major A.H. Menzies in command of the battalion. The work in hand was consolidation to dig in in front of the enemy's position on the high ground in front of Martinpuich.

The battalion, carrying picks and shovels, silently marched off in the fading light up the valley. A road led from Bazentin-le-Grand to the southern corner of the wood. The upper part of the valley was 'T'-shaped, the right branch stretching towards Longueval, the left along the south-western face of High Wood. As the Highlanders marched up in file they met some stragglers of Indian Horse coming down. When the head of the column reached the corner of the wood, A Company - Captain T.H.H. Warren - and B Company - Captain Wilfred Whitson - deployed to the left, and moved on their objective with A on the right finding direction from the lie of the ground and the guidance of the south-west edge of the wood.

So far all had gone well. The orders had been clear and they had been quickly and quietly carried out, in spite of a few casualties from shell-fire and the difficulty of moving over unknown ground in the dark. Suddenly when they were almost half-way to their objective there was an intense burst of rifle and machine gun fire from the wood itself — which according to our information was entirely held by the 7th Division. At the same time heavy fire was opened from the front.

The shock was tremendous, and the deadly hail from front and flank took a heavy toll of both companies. One of the first casualties was Captain Warren, who fell badly wounded. To advance further with the right flank thus exposed was out of the question, and Captain Whitson ordered the men to lie down. The configuration of the ground gave a certain amount of cover, but already the losses in killed and wounded had been very heavy, particularly in A Company.

As most of the fire was coming from the wood it was necessary before anything else could be done, to clear at least the edge of it. Accordingly, the bombers on the right of A Company were ordered to attack it. This they did with great gallantry, throwing bombs and dashing in with the bayonet in an endeavour to get to close quarters with the enemy. Privates Flint and Milligan were prominent in this attack, but the wood was too strongly held, and the enemy's fire frustrated all efforts to clear the flank. Some German trenches along the edge were occupied by part of A Company, and this made the position a little more secure for the time being.

Meanwhile, the two companies were returning the enemy's fire from the front, and digging-in. This was done not without further loss — Lieut. Raeburn, A Company, a most promising young officer, being among the killed. About the same time 2nd Lieut. C.D. Reid of B Company lost his life in, a gallant attempt to lead his platoon forward.

It was now only too clear that the information that had come from the Division, that the whole of High Wood was held, was false. And when some men were observed to be dribbling out of the south corner of it, it was obvious that immediate action would have to be taken to secure our right flank and prevent the precarious position of the leading companies from becoming much worse. Capt. Menzies ordered Capt. Cowie with three platoons of C Company to advance through the wood, which he it understood was out of the 33rd Division's area altogether. Capt. Cowie entered the wood and moved up a ridge some distance without meeting anyone till he bumped into the Germans. Driving these before him, he managed to get into a position in line with A Company's right. He was unable to get any further for the enemy's resistance increased and his small force was quite insufficient to clear the whole wood. This successful little operation was not achieved without considerable loss, among the killed being two more excellent platoon commanders, Lieuts. Cranston and Woodside. The position of the small party of Highlanders in the wood was not an enviable one, but they grimly held on throughout the remainder of the night. The right flank being now comparatively secure and the left in touch with the Queens, it was decided to consolidate the ground won at such terrible cost. This work had to be done under a galling fire. All through the night the numbers of killed and wounded continued to mount up. The stretcher-bearers, as always, worked indefatigably without regard for their own safety.

Dawn found the Highlanders clinging to the slopes of the valley, more or less dug into shell holes in an irregular line, with the right near the wood somewhat held back. A slight ridge running south-west from the wood gave some protection to the second line, but in front the position was very exposed. Behind was the open valley swept by the enemy's fire from two directions. Colonel Darling's conduct did much to steady the battalion during this tragic night and morning. His presence in the front line while the work was going on, the cool way he proceeded from post to post long after there was sufficient light for

him to be seen by the enemy snipers, and above all his confidence and ready smile for everyone, acted as a tonic to sorely-tried nerves.

At 5.50 a.m. an order by General Baird timed 4.13 a.m. was received. The 33rd Division was to attack the enemy's switch line in front of Martinpuich at 1a.m. with the 100th Brigade on the right on a frontage of 1000 yards from High Wood westwards, and the 98th on the left with its outer flank on the Martinpuich-Bazentin-le-Petit railway. The 19th Brigade was in reserve.

The Highlanders and Queens were to carry out the attack, which was to be preceded by a half-hour bombardment, during which the attacking battalions were to push forward as near the enemy's positions as possible. The 16th Bn. K.R.R. was to be in support and the 2nd Worcesters in reserve.

The difficulties in carrying out this order were tremendous. The assaulting battalions had both been hard hit during the night, both were holding lines of shell holes with no communications. Behind them the valley was open and under direct enemy observation. Worst of all, the enemy held the northern half of High Wood including the western corner, which was full of machine guns enfilading the line of advance. Col. Darling was fully alive to this danger and pointed out that the attack could not succeed till the wood was cleared.

Superior authority did little or nothing to help — apparently it was not believed even yet that there were any Germans there — and at about half-past seven Col. Darling got a message from General Baird stating that it had been represented that the 7th Division should be asked to clear the wood preparatory to our attack, and enquiring if anything was being done about it. Nothing was being done. The local commanding-officer had received no direct order to clear the wood, although "it had been suggested" that he should do so. It was too big a job for him, however, so Col. Darling was left to tackle the problem himself.

The force at his disposal was inadequate. Three companies were already engaged with the enemy, one in the wood and two in the open. All had lost heavily, particularly A Company. Col. Darling decided to attack up the valley with B and D Companies, B on the right and each on a frontage of about 500 yards, while C Company (less one platoon) was given the task of clearing the wood. The 4th Platoon of C Company was in support of B and D. One of the companies of the 16th K.R.R. was detailed to support this attack in the wood, leaving only three behind the main assault of the Brigade.

At 8.30 the bombardment commenced and the companies began to feel their way forward. The enemy guns replied, and heavy machine gun fire from the corner of the wood made movement almost impossible.

Capt. Frame commanding D Company was wounded. Very little ground had been gained when the barrage lifted at nine o'clock.

At once the three companies dashed forward, Capt. Cowie in the wood and B and D up the open slope. C Company and the Rifles made some progress, but were soon held up, Capt. Cowie being, wounded. The non-success of this forlorn hope doomed the main attack to failure. As they advanced, the Highlanders were simply mown down like grass. From the front and right flank a deadly fire was poured in on them. Among the first casualties were Lieut. Ogg leading the first wave of B Company and 2nd Lieut. Terry Todd, who fell wounded while gallantly leading No.3 Platoon in support. Sergt. Wood carried on, but soon he too was wounded.

C Company's support platoon now came on, led by Lieut. Duvoisin. As it advanced up the slope it came under a withering fire and lost heavily, Duvoisin being killed. The attack had simply melted away, the remnants of the two companies taking precarious refuge in shell holes, from which they continued to fire at the enemy.

The King's Royal Rifle Corps lost heavily before reaching the position held by the Highlanders. The Worcesters then came forward, penetrated the wood for some distance, but by noon it was evident that the attack of the 100th Brigade had been a terrible and costly failure. About 150 yards had been won and held, but the new position was hopelessly exposed.

The 7th Division made two attempts to clear the wood in the afternoon and failed, and at nightfall the situation was unchanged. Under cover of darkness the line was adjusted, some of the more advanced posts, which had been held all day, being abandoned.

Early next morning — 3 a.m. — the Highlanders were relieved by the 1st Cameronians of 19th Brigade and moved back to Mametz Wood. Major A.H. Menzies was wounded while leading up the relief

— he had had to do this himself as battalion headquarters was reduced by this time to two men who had to remain at the telephone. In consequence of this the party of C Company in the wood, now under Lieut. T.M. Burton, was not relieved till some hours later, by this time the 7th Division had withdrawn from the wood.

Some fifty men, many of them wounded, belonging to the forward companies in the open, knew nothing about the relief and remained lying out among the killed in the shell holes they had reached during the attack. These men, among whom were Sergeants Ross and Watson, also Corporal Deacon, were subjected during the following day to severe sniping from the wood. They were short of water and knew nothing of the situation. During the afternoon they crawled back through the long grass to the trench the battalion had occupied before the attack. Finding this position unoccupied, they made a dash for it down the valley, and were directed by the Cameronians to Mametz Wood “to join their battalion — or what was left of it.”

At Mametz Wood this amounted to less than half the men who had marched up to High Wood. The casualties had been, killed: 5 officers 87 other ranks, wounded: 15 officers 214 other ranks, missing: 1 officer 99 other ranks. Of the missing it was only too certain that almost all had been killed. Thus the total casualties amounted to 421 all ranks.

The pity of it was that these lives seemed to have been thrown away. In battle the staffs of higher formations cannot of course be in close touch with the situation in the firing line; their information is nearly always belated and very often incorrect. On the evening of July 14th the Highlanders were ordered to dig in as a line with their right resting on High Wood which was reported to be definitely held by the 7th Division. This order was carried out although with some loss, owing to the information about the Wood being false. But no great harm was done for the battalion remained steady and secured its flank.

The attack next morning, however, when the situation was clear is difficult to justify. Although it was well known that the enemy held the Wood and could enfilade any advance that was attempted, an attack was ordered. The attack was made. It failed as it was bound to fail; obviously someone had blundered. But as far as the Glasgow Highlanders were concerned, the fighting at High Wood strengthened their confidence in their Colonel and their Brigadier.

The 19th and 98th Brigades continued the fight for some days, suffering casualties out of all proportion to the small gains of ground made. At and round High Wood the infantry of the 33rd Division lost 4840 all ranks; at Waterloo the total loss of all the British infantry engaged was 4565.

In a special order dated July 23rd, Major-General Landon congratulated the whole Division on its conduct and said that his “*admiration and pride at the splendid spirit shown under most trying and difficult circumstances was unbounded.*”

The G.O.C. 91st Infantry Brigade 7th Division in a letter to General Baird said: *I am writing to ask if you would be good enough to convey to the stretcher-bearers of the 9th Highland Light Infantry the admiration and thanks of my brigade for their gallantry and help in clearing our wounded in High Wood on 15th July.* That instances of individual gallantry were not wanting is shown by the long list of honours gained by the battalion, but of those who died, how many of them were as deserving? The Glasgow Highlanders who marched up the ‘Valley of Death’ on the evening of 14th July had trained together and fought together for two years. It is true there had already been heavy losses and big drafts, but practically all the new men had come from the same stable; our own 2nd and 3rd lines. In July 1916 the officers and men who were lost were irreplaceable, for High Wood marked the first really big break from the battalion of 1914.

Chapter 11

LONGUEVAL, AUGUST 1916

After being relieved at High Wood in the early morning of 16th July, the Glasgow Highlanders had moved back to Mametz Wood. Here was rest of a kind. The front line was three thousand yards away, and there were 'bivvies' in which one could sleep. But there was little cover from shell-fire, which was continual — for the battle was still raging with 'unabated fury.

The battalion remained at Mametz Wood for four days. Each day the enemy guns took their toll, one or two being killed and five or six wounded every twenty-four hours. A draft of 355 men arrived to replace some of the losses. Included in it were a few of our own men, but the majority belonged to lowland regiments: The Royal Scots, Royal Scots Fusiliers, King's Own Scottish Borderers and Scottish Rifles, being represented. Some were very young, some rather old, and some just out of hospital.

That night the battalion, new draft and all, moves up into close support at Bazentin-le-Grand, relieving the Royal Welch Fusiliers, 22nd. Brigade. Here the shelling was heavy and we lost 2 killed and 19 wounded. The 4th Seaforths took over the trenches at midnight 21st/22nd and at 3 a.m. The Highlanders arrived at Meaulte, remained there for the day, and reached Albert in the forenoon of the 23rd.

Next day packs were reissued, tents were supplied and conditions became more comfortable, especially as the weather was dry. All companies were able to indulge in the pleasure of a bath, and there was a general — and much needed — clean up. The draft was medically inspected, and no fewer than 79 were judged to be unfit.

A tremendous amount of work had now to be done in reorganizing the battalion after its heavy losses. This and training — especially bayonet fighting — occupied the next few days. The A.D.M.S. inspected the 79 men of the draft which the M.O. had found unfit for duty in the line. He confirmed the verdict in respect of 18, but the balance had to remain and do their best. The losses of the 'wearing-out battle' were telling on our man-power.

The G.O.C. 33rd Division presented ribbons to those who had won Military Medals at High Wood. An excellent reinforcement arrived on 4th August; 87 of our own men and nine junior officers.

On August 7th the 100th brigade went into the line again, relieving the 152nd Brigade. The Highlanders took over from the 8th Argylls at High Wood, the greater part of which was still occupied by the Germans. Work was immediately started joining up saps in the wood and improving the defences generally. On the 8th the wood was very heavily shelled and we lost 2 officers and 22 men. Next day was as bad; battalion headquarters at the south end of the wood was under heavy fire all afternoon, while eleven enemy aeroplanes flew overhead. The shelling continued all night and the twenty-four hours cost the battalion another officer and 22 men. The 2nd Queens took charge of the wood and the battalion went back to Bazentin-le-Grand. While in support there during the 10th, 11th and 12th, casualties from shell-fire were 20, 11 and 7.

Early on the 15th, 4th Suffolks, 98th Brigade, took over and the battalion moved back to Becordel. During the relief the battalion had nine more casualties, including a most popular and efficient officer, Lieut. T. M. Burton, MC (commanding B Company) who was very badly wounded while getting his men past a particularly dangerous cross-roads. He had taken the head of the column into safety, the place was being heavily shelled, and he went back to hurry the rest on. This action cost him the loss of a leg.

The 100th Brigade was now in divisional reserve, and as usual, working parties were wanted every day. On the 19th, having received a useful reinforcement of 15 Lewis gunners and 15 trained signallers, the battalion went into the front line again between High Wood and Delville Wood. This position was held in depth on a narrow front, B Company occupying the firing line — which had been taken from the enemy the day before — with A, C and D behind in succession. As there was now a regular system of trenches, losses were not so heavy.

Wood Lane, our front line, was partly occupied by the enemy. Both from the point of view of present comfort and future progress, it was considered advisable to clear him out. On our left was a

bombing post and beyond that the Boche, who held about eighty yards of trench. At 11 p.m. on the 20th the Highlanders attacked and secured the position without loss. We were now in touch on the left with the 20th Royal Fusiliers 19th Brigade, the 2nd Worcesters being on our right with the 14th Division beyond them.

Since the middle of July there had been almost continual fighting in the Delville Wood — High Wood salient, but with no very marked result except heavy casualties. Delville Wood and Longueval had changed hands several times, and had finally been recovered at the end of July by our old comrades of the 2nd. Division. Guillemont to the south-east had been entered more than once, and as a result of an advance in co-operation with the French our troops now held the outskirts of that village. Combles valley marked the boundary between ourselves and our allies. The possession of High Wood itself was still in dispute, and the only event of importance on the left had been the capture of Pozieres by the 1st Australian Division on July 25th.

On 21st August a night attack was ordered on very short notice. The brigade order reached the battalion at 9 p.m. — the attack to be launched at midnight. The Worcesters and Highlanders were to take the enemy front line from the Delville Wood — Flers Road on the right to Wood Lane on the left, with the K.R.R. in support and the Queens in reserve. Without loss of time Colonel Darling issued his orders. B Company under Capt. Matthew Anderson was given the right next the Worcesters. D Company under 2nd Lieut. Duckett the left. Well before the appointed time the two companies crept out as silently as possible into no-man's land, each being organized with two platoons in front and two in support. Shortly before midnight they were ready.

Whether it was that the Worcesters got the order later than we did, or that they had greater difficulties to contend with, is not clear, but they were not ready at zero hour, and just before midnight Capt. Anderson received a message informing him that they would not attack. He immediately sent a message to Lieut. Duckett ordering him to stand fast. It was now midnight.

The order was too late. D Company was advancing. Anderson had to make a quick decision. He probably knew that the attack was now a forlorn hope. Should he stand fast with his company and cut the loss? A lot could be argued in favour of this, but such a decision was one that all who knew Matthew Anderson knew him incapable of taking. The other company had started, he must back it up. The enemy was now thoroughly awake, and Anderson led his company forward through a storm of shot. He advanced erect — not stooping as one instinctively does — and was last seen by the light of flares and bursting shells at the enemy's wire, where he was killed. His company did its best to follow him, but the leading line was simply withered away.

D Company fared no better; 2nd Lieut. Duckett was badly wounded, and the survivors of the two companies took refuge in shell-holes and later made the best of their way back to the trenches. The action cost the battalion 7 officers and 86 other ranks. Besides Capt. Anderson, killed, 2nd Lieuts. K.L. Duckett and W.D. Wallace died of wounds. It was a bad night for the battalion — nearly a hundred lost and nothing gained.

Captain Anderson was one of the now rapidly-diminishing number of officers who had come to France with the battalion in 1914. He had been a subaltern of H Company, then for a short time a platoon-commander in A Company. After the battle of Festubert he became second-in-command of the company and quite lately had been appointed to the command of B. He had a great gift of getting to know his men, and took the keenest interest in all their concerns. A very strict disciplinarian — with himself as with others — he was nevertheless deservedly popular. The manner of his death was but a last instance of his devotion to duty.

After the attack C Company took over the front line, B and D being sent back to Montauban, and the following night the rest of the battalion was relieved and the whole reunited at Pommiers Redoubt, Mametz Wood. A draft of 230 Glasgow Highlanders arrived from home.

On August 24th the failure of the night attack was amply avenged. A full-dress attack was ordered for that evening. The 100th Brigade had very much the same objective as before, but this time the 14th Division was co-operating on the right. There was to be a thorough preliminary bombardment for two hours before the attack, the second hour of it intense. The 2nd Worcesters, 16th K.R. R., and 1st Queens, were all to advance simultaneously with the Glasgow Highlanders in support. The 100th Brigade attack was to start at 6.45 p.m., that of the 14th Division an hour earlier; on its front, part of Delville Wood had

to be cleared before it could get into the open and into line.

The battalion did an enormous amount of work on the 23rd and on the night of 23rd/24th, carrying up bombs and ammunition. The machine gunners had a great barrage scheme on hand, and two companies were detailed to supply them with S.A.A. and water, of which a great quantity was required for keeping the guns cool.

At half-past one in the afternoon the battalion moved up to its position in the support trenches, and in due course the bombardment commenced. For two hours shells whistled overhead and crashed among the German trenches. During the last hour before zero our gunners surpassed themselves. The three battalions of the 100th Brigade went over in great style and soon succeeded in gaining their objectives and even more. The 14th Division were equally successful.

The Glasgow Highlanders took a useful if minor share in this operation. C and D Companies reinforced the Queens and helped them to consolidate, B supported the Worcesters and Kings Royal Rifles. A being divided into three parties carried up S.A. A., bombs and Royal Engineers material to the battalions in front.

Before morning the assaulting battalions were relieved: the Highlanders took over from the Queens, and the 1st Middlesex of the 98th Brigade replaced the other two. After another day in the line, during which the enemy's shelling was heavy all the time — as was to be expected — the Highlanders in turn were relieved, and marched back to join the rest of the brigade in divisional reserve at Fricourt Wood. This successful operation had cost the battalion the loss of 92 men fortunately an unusually small proportion being killed. On the evening of the 27th the brigade moved further back to Becordel.

The following special orders were issued:

Headquarters 100th Infantry Brigade.

In connection with the attack carried out on August 24th the following messages have been received:

From G.O.C. 33rd Division dated August 25th. 'The Major-General wishes to convey to you and your troops his congratulations on your successful attack yesterday.'

From G.O.C. XV Corps dated August 25th.

'The Corps-Commander sends congratulations on successful operation yesterday'

The Brigadier-General wishes to thank all ranks of the Brigade not only for the splendid way in which they carried out the attack on August 24th but also for the fine work accomplished in preparing for the attack. He is well aware of the very severe demands which it has been necessary to make on the endurance of all ranks since the commencement of these operations, and wishes to express his thanks to officers, and men for the splendid way in which they have responded to these demands on every occasion.

The Brigadier-General desires this to be read to all ranks on parade.

From 33rd Division dated 25th August.

The Major-General had great pleasure in circulating the following copy of a telegram from XV Corps-Commander, and wishes it to be read to all troops in the Division.

'Following extract from Fourth begins AAA Please convey to 33rd Division and especially to General Baird and the 100th Brigade the Commander's congratulations on their performance yesterday which he thinks was especially creditable to all concerned at the end of such a long period in the line as the 33rd Division has now had AAA Ends AAA.'

The Corps-Commander has great pleasure in forwarding this message and wishes to add his own appreciation of the good work accomplished AAA.

Indeed the 33rd Division's period, in the line since the middle of July had been a hard one. On August 30th the battalion marched to Ribement- sur-Ancre and next day to St. Gratien. At Querrieu the battalion marched past the 4th Army Commander, General Sir Henry Rawlinson, who asked Colonel Darling what his casualties had been. When the latter told him, the General replied, "What have they been since you came to the Somme? I don't mean from the beginning of the war." But Colonel Darling's figure, 52 officers and 750 men represented the loss during the first six weeks on the Somme.

Chapter 12

LE TRANSLOY, NOVEMBER 1916

During the fortnight which followed the fighting round High Wood and Longueval, the Glasgow Highlanders were almost constantly on the move. On September 1st the battalion marched to Talmas, next day to Prouville, remaining there during Sunday the 3rd. After spending Mondays night at Fortel, Tuesday night at Croisette, it arrived at Maizieres on the 6th and remained there for two nights. The distances covered each day were not great, the weather on the whole was good, and it was a great relief to the battered battalion to be out of the firing line. The change of scene soon had its effect on the officers and men, but the wholesale slaughter of the Somme had left too deep a mark to be readily effaced.

It was a very different battalion from what it had been when it came south after its triumph at Mad Point. Apart from the tremendous change of personnel — the casualties had approximated to the fighting strength of the battalion — the survivors had passed through an ordeal probably without parallel in any former war.

A battalion is not simply a collection of officers, non-commissioned officers and men. It is a complex organization consisting of headquarters with its departments for communication, supply and transport and so on, and — in 1916 — of four companies divided into sixteen platoons and sixty-four sections. Each company has its own signallers and runners, and within each platoon the sections have different functions according to the weapons they carry.

The fighting part of this organization had been destroyed; it had now to be recreated. New officers, N.C.O's and men had to be fitted into their places. They had to get to know one another and above all to trust one another — they had to become Glasgow Highlanders. This process had been gone through already more than once, but never on such a big scale as now. There was little enough time for this rebuilding and it was not made any easier by the battalion's being continually on the move.

At six o'clock on the morning of 8th September the Glasgow Highlanders marched to Monts-en-Ternois, embussed and proceeded to Halloy, arriving there about mid-day. The following day the front held by the 52nd Brigade opposite the Gommecourt salient was reconnoitred and on the 10th the battalion relieved the 12th Manchesters in support positions at Chateau-la-Haie and Foncquevillers. Twenty-four hours later the Highlanders took over the front line trenches from the 9th West Riding Regiment.

The situation was quiet; Gommecourt was well to the north of the battle area, and there had been little doing since the holding attack at the start of the offensive — besides, the occupants of the opposing trenches were believed to be Saxons whose habits were generally supposed to be less objectionable than some other varieties of the enemy. The days therefore passed uneventfully although plenty of work was done, a completely new front line being constructed. This task was made unpleasant by the large number of corpses lying in no-man's land.

After a tour of eight days, during which the battalion lost few killed and wounded, it moved back to Souastre, where it was inspected by Major-General Pinney who had recently assume command of the 33rd Division.

The Division was relieved on September 27th and moved back to the Doullens area. The G.H. marched to Bouquemaision, spending two nights at Humbercourt and one at Lucheux on the way. Here at last was an opportunity for rest, reorganization, training and refreshment. Bouquemaision, although a fair-sized village was not a particularly attractive place, but Doullens with its shops, and above all its baths, was only four miles away.

Colonel Darling saw to it that the reorganization and training were properly carried out. Specialists were trained — signallers, runners, Lewis-gunners, and bombers. Platoon, company and battalion in attacks advancing under a timed barrage, night operations, wood fighting — all were practised. The Bois de Robermont figured so often in the schemes that it was generally believed in the battalion that its next action would be an attack on Gommecourt Wood, where no progress had been made since July 1st. Special instruction was given in rapid digging, wiring, the use of the rifle wire cutter, and tank tactics. Amid all this activity sport was not neglected.

In due course the inevitable move orders were issued, and on the morning of October 19th the Highlanders embussed for Corbie on the Somme, about nine miles east of Amiens, the transport having departed the previous day. Rain fell steadily as the clumsy vehicles splashed through water and mud, carrying the battalion back to play its part in the last act of the tragedy of the Somme.

At the end of August when the 53rd Division was withdrawn from the battle, the line ran from the western outskirts of Guillemont, along the front of Delville Wood, through High Wood, thence along the high ground north of Pozieres to the enemy's front line stronghold of Thiepval, which had successfully resisted all our efforts to capture it. Since then our hold on the ridge had been extended. Our right had gone forward on 9th September when Ginchy was taken, and some progress had also been made east of Delville Wood.

On September 15th, after three days bombardment the Fourth Army again attacked on a wide front assisted for the first time by tanks. This resulted in a substantial gain of territory, our line being advanced about one mile on a six-mile front. High Wood was at last completely in our hands, the 47th Division having carried it after hard fighting.

Ten days later another grand attack gave us Morval, le Boeufs and Gueudecourt. Our hold on Morval and a French advance on the high ground to the east of Combles made the latter village untenable, and it was occupied by the Allies on the 26th. On the left of the battle front General Gough's Army took Thiepval and the high ground to the east.

The successes of September were substantial. They were achieved partly by fresh troops: the Guards, Canadians and New Zealanders being among those now thrown into the battle for the first time. The enemy had been pushed off the tops of the ridge and down the slopes beyond. All his laboriously constructed positions except his last line running in front of le Transloy and Bapaume were in our hands. It looked as if a decisive success were in our grasp when the weather broke completely. The tanks which had given so much assistance to our infantry in September were practically useless in October. Even the infantry themselves were stuck in the mud and the roads through the devastated area — eight miles as the crow flies from Fricourt to les Boeufs — had virtually ceased to exist.

During October therefore, only minor operations could be undertaken and these met with little success. Such was the situation when the 33rd Division returned to the battlefield.

The Glasgow Highlanders spent two nights at Corbie, moved to Meaulte on October 21st and on to Mansel Camp, Mametz, the next day. The weather was cold and wet and altogether unsuitable for living under canvas in a quagmire. After three days the battalion advanced another stage to Carnoy Huts. Here it remained for three more days during which large parties were engaged in road-making, one man being killed and three wounded while on this duty. On the 28th it marched in a downpour of rain to its last halting place short of the trenches at Trones Wood, where, as there were no ready-made shelters, bivouacs had to be constructed.

The following afternoon at four o'clock the battalion moved off and marched to the trenches south-east of Lesboeufs, a distance of about five miles. Rain still fell in torrents. The take-over could not be carried out till after dark; most of the guides detailed by the out-going battalion lost their way, with the result that the relief was not completed till two o'clock in the morning. The trenches were in an indescribable condition with mud and water, and were hourly getting worse, as the rain continued all night and most of the next two days.

The conditions under which the Highlanders were now living were worse than they had ever before been called upon to endure: cold, wet, and exhausted, they could scarcely drag their feet through the mud. Some of the mules bringing up supplies were lost in the mud.

That night Colonel Stormonth Darling, on his return to battalion headquarters after a round of the trenches which had taken him hours to accomplish, found orders waiting him for an attack the following afternoon. At half-past five in the morning of 1st November the Colonel, having already issued his orders for the attack, left his headquarters to visit his company commanders again. He did not get very far; just as he reached D Company he was shot by a sniper and killed. The loss the battalion suffered in his death simply cannot be exaggerated. He had now commanded the Glasgow Highlanders for a year. From the first he had won our hearts by his quiet humour and kindness, our respect by his efficiency, and our admiration by his courage. As a commanding officer he inspired absolute trust. The officers knew that they could not hope to keep him much longer, for now that the battalion was back in the fighting line he

must have been marked for early promotion — now he was lost, not only to us but to the Service and the Country. Coming when it did his death was a calamity; in a few hours the battalion was to attack and his steady leadership had never been more required than now.

Major John Menzies being with the battle reserve, the command of the battalion devolved on Captain Wilfred Whitson, who came back to headquarters and completed the arrangements for the attack.

The Glasgow Highlanders were on the extreme right of the Fourth Army, Morvar having been handed over to French, and the latter were co-operating in the proposed advance. The intention was to secure the low ridge in front of le Transloy and thereby to get better observation. From its present position in the hollow south-east of Lesbœufs amidst a maze of waterlogged trenches and shell-holes, the battalion was to attack over a sea of mud with the French on higher ground on the right, and the 2nd Worcestershires on the left.

Conditions had been getting steadily worse since the battalion had taken over the trenches. The men had had little opportunity for sleep during, the last two — if not three — nights, they were covered with mud, soaked to the skin, and chilled to the bone. Many were already down with trench feet and all were approaching a state of physical exhaustion. What Colonel Darling thought of the proposed attack is not on record. There is no doubt however that if he had lived, and if he had formed the opinion that it could only result in useless waste of life with no chance of success, his report to higher authority would have carried a great deal of weight.

Captain Whitson reported to General Baird how seriously the fighting efficiency of the battalion was impaired, and how the exhaustion of the men was such that there was little prospect of them being able to assault successfully with the ground in its present condition.

The Brigadier's reply:

'Dear Whitson,

I have received representations as to the condition of your battalion. I am fully aware of the great strain that has been placed on the endurance of all ranks during the last few days but it is not in my power to do more than to ask the men to remember the name of their regiment, and especially on a day like this, when it has suffered the irreparable loss of the best commanding officer a unit ever had, to be animated by only one thought, the determination to win through.

I hope you will make a point of encouraging the men in the above sense. Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) Walter Baird.

It is probable that the operations would have been postponed had it not been that they were in co-operation with the French, whose trenches being on higher ground were in much better condition than ours, and their troops may well have been in better condition also.

Zero had been fixed for half-past three in the afternoon. The advance was to be made in three waves with A and D Companies in front, The first wave was to capture the German front line system, the second to go through and cover the consolidation of the position, and the third carrying tools was to do the work. In addition to his usual equipment, each man carried an extra bandolier of S.A.A., two bombs and two sandbags. During the day our eighteen-pounders and light howitzers and the French seventy-fives kept up a steady fire on the objectives Boritzka and Hazy Trenches with occasional bursts of rapid. A mist hung over the scene making observations difficult; the bombardment therefore was not as satisfactory as it might have been, and it was difficult to form a clear idea of where exactly the objectives were. There was even uncertainty as to the actual position of our own infantry, and in consequence the fire of the heavies was confined to the enemy's back areas.

Shortly before zero an intense barrage was directed on and in front of the supposed German positions. Our guns also kept the ground to the north under fire, and here the 98th Brigade, which was not attacking, co-operated with rifles and machine guns as a protection for the left flank of the Worcestershires. At half-past three the barrage began to move forward and the first wave climbed out of the trenches.

Steps had been cut in the parapet to supplement the trench ladders of which there was an insufficient supply. These steps in the slippery mud were difficult to negotiate and in many cases broke away as soon as any weight was put upon them.. By helping each other out, the men got on the top and

started to go forward, but from the first the line was ragged.

As the barrage crept forward the Highlanders struggled after it, splashing through shell holes and stumbling in the mud. The intention had been to keep as close as possible to the barrage, but before our men were able to near the enemy's trenches it had passed beyond, and the Germans were able to pour in a heavy fire. The difficulties of the ground, the condition of the men, and the heavy losses, had broken the attack into fragments.

In A Company, 2nd Lieutenants E.J.H. MacIldowie and J.M. Whyte were killed, and G. K. Warren and D.K. Simpson were wounded. What momentum the attack ever had was lost, individual effort alone was left, and the survivors, too few to carry the position — if they were able to reach it — could do no more than sink into shell-holes or any other meagre cover that they could find.

The attack had failed; it would have been folly to make a second attempt, and none was ordered. The Worcestershires' attack had met with the same fate, but on the right the French secured part of their objective.

In the evening Major John Menzies reached the battalion and took over command. The night was spent in rescuing the wounded and reorganizing the battalion. The Highlanders continued to hold their miserable trenches for another twenty-four hours, during which the weather improved. At 9 p.m. on the 2nd the Queens started to take over the trenches, and by two o'clock next morning the Highlanders were back at Guillemont busily engaged constructing bivouacs. Some gunners from a battery nearby kindly supplied our famishing men with hot soup and tea. A party of volunteers remained behind to bring back Colonel Darling's body.

On the 3rd the Queens attacked over the same ground, but without success, and a third attempt was ordered to be made on the 5th. A few days dry weather made this a more practical proposition, and an equally important factor was the adoption of General Baird's plan for a flank attack from the more advanced French position on the right. The 2nd Worcestershires were given this part of the operations while the frontal attack was in the hands of the 1st Queens and 16th King's Royal Rifles. The Glasgow Highlanders were to be in reserve.

In the evening the battalion moved up from Guillemont to Lesboeufs, taking up a position at midnight in a sunken road north of what remained of the village. All night the guns thundered. In the morning the fire became more intense, culminating at eleven o'clock when the infantry went forward. All the objectives were quickly taken the flank attack of the Worcesters being a conspicuous success, and about mid-day B Company went up to assist in the consolidation of the new front line. A and D Companies also moved forward to constrict and hold strong points while C remained in reserve. The enemy did not counter-attack and the new line was strongly established. A number of men who had been wounded in the previous attacks and had been lying out in no-man's land ever since, were rescued. That night the 19th Brigade relieved the 100th, the 5th Cameronians taking over from the G.H., who moved back to a reserve position with the appetising name of Bovril Trench. Next day a long march took the battalion right back to Citadel Camp, Fricourt, halts being made at Guillemont for soup and at Carnoy for tea. The camp was a sea of mud, there were very few huts available and part of the reduced battalion had to make the best of it under canvas.

However, the accumulated parcels of nine days mail helped to make life worth living once more. A draft of fifty men arrived, and three days later the Glasgow Highlanders, now no longer covered with Somme mud, entrained for Airaines whence they marched to the villages of Sorel and Wanel.

The battle of the Somme was nearly over. On the morning of 13th November a great attack was made astride the River Ancre, resulting in the taking of Beaucourt and Beaumont-Hamel, the 2nd and 51st Divisions distinguishing themselves particularly. This success brought to a close the greatest battle that had ever been fought.

The Battle of the Somme was a victory to our arms: its immediate objects were achieved, Verdun was relieved and the enemy's main forces pinned to the Western Front. Tactically it reversed the position obtaining on 1st July, for it left us in possession of all the high ground forth of the river from which the enemy had dominated our positions. If the weather had not broken down in October and November the success might have been very much greater. It was particularly unfortunate that the conditions had prevented full use being made of our tanks while the element of surprise remained.

But whatever the Higher Command may have expected of it, whatever our people at home may

have hoped, there can be no doubt that to the troops themselves the battle was a bitter disappointment.

They at least believed that the great object was to break the enemy's line, roll him back, and bring the end of the war appreciably nearer by inflicting on him a crushing defeat. It was small comfort to be told that it was a wearing-out battle; it certainly was, but our infantry were convinced that they were being worn out faster than the enemy.

Considering that our army was now almost entirely composed of amateur soldiers with at most two years training, the way its morale had stood the five months carnage was something for any nation to be proud of. The troops now realized that the road to victory was going to be much longer and infinitely harder than expected, but they never swerved from the belief that, however meagre their individual chances of surviving were, victory would surely come in the end.

Chapter 13

WINTER 1916-1917

Sorel and Wanel were small and unattractive villages known to the rank and file as Sodom and Gomorrah, but the billets were fairly good, and the weather although cold was dry. The first duty to be undertaken was the usual reorganization. Church parade on Sunday 12th November took the form of a memorial service for our late beloved commanding officer.

On Monday morning Lieutenant-Colonel John Menzies held his first inspection of the battalion and then training started in earnest. All the usual work was done, commencing each day with a steady drill parade, which proved an excellent tonic. Other features of the programme were classes for the N.C.O's under the R.S.M., and a riding school for the junior officers — the platoon commander of today was only too likely to become the company commander of tomorrow.

The 33rd Division was out of the line for about a month, and a football tournament was organized. The G.H. beat the 16th K.R.R. in the 100th Brigade final by 2 goals to nil, following this up by defeating the 20th Royal Fusiliers (19th brigade), a hitherto unbeaten team, by 3 goals to nil in the semi-final, and won the competition by scoring 5 goals to 1 against the 2nd. Argylls (98th Brigade).

Major-General Pinney inspected the battalion and presented medal ribbons to Lance-Corporals H. Armstrong, and H.S. Hutchison, Privates J.H. Jack, F. Roseweir and W. Young, for gallantry during the late operations.

The period of rest came to an end on the evening of December 3rd when the Highlanders marched to Pont Remy and then entrained for Mericourt-l'Abbe near Albert, whence they marched to Sailly le Sec on the Somme. Further moves forward were made on the 6th to Camp 112 on the Albert - Bray road and on the following day to a camp near the village of Maricourt which had marked the right of the British line at the commencement of the Battle of the Somme. The weather had broken badly and on the 8th the battalion marched up to the Maurepas Ravine through a storm of sleet and rain. The roads were in a shocking condition, in some places knee-deep in mud. The men spent a damp and draughty night in a camp of large French tents. The C.O. and company commanders had by this time reconnoitred the trenches east of Combles then in occupation by the French. Sir Douglas Haig had been constrained to relieve our allies on a considerable front notwithstanding that his troops were at least as much in need of rest as theirs. The line ran from Clery-sur-Somme round the front of Bouchavesnes, thence along the high ground skirting the west edge of St. Pierre Vaast Wood, through Sailly—Saillisel to the ridge opposite le Transloy which the 33rd Division had struggled for in the mud a month before, and finally won.

The Highlanders relieved The 3rd Battalion of the 37th Regiment of the French Army in trenches east of the remains of Rancourt and overlooking St. Pierre Vaast Wood. Cold wet weather continued, the trenches could be more aptly described as ditches, but the staff work for the relief was perfect and it was quickly completed.

Conditions now were very much the same as they had been at le Transloy, but with one great difference — active operations had been suspended. The fire trenches were newly-constructed and consequently they were shallow and almost without dug-outs. Communication trenches were few and long and wet.

There was plenty of work for everyone, including large parties of Worcestershires who gave valuable assistance, and indeed everyone needed to work to keep the circulation going. To this uncomfortable state of things a draft arrived of 94 men from the 2/6th H.L.I. and 74 from the 2/7th; very fine men, but those from the 7th were unaccustomed to the kilt.

On the night of the 12th the Worcestershires took over. One of their companies stuck in the mud in a communication trench and held up the relief for two hours. Eventually the Highlanders struggled out and occupied reserve trenches 2,500 yards behind on the reverse slope of the ridge south of Priez Farm. Shell-fire had taken its normal toll of the battalion but losses from cold and exposure were much greater. Although every precaution had been taken, there were several cases of frost-bite and a number of men had to be evacuated suffering from 'trench feet'. The 100th Brigade's tour of duty in the trenches came to an end when the 20th Royal Fusiliers took over from the Highlanders, who marched back to Maurepas

and proceeded by us to Suzanne on the Somme, arriving at hutted camp No.17 at 2 a.m. on the 15th. Here another welcome reinforcement joined, a splendid draft of 175 Lanarkshire Yeomanry and 77 Glasgow Highlanders from the 2nd Line.

The 17th being a Sunday was a day of rest, and on Monday buses carried the battalion forward to Maurepas, whence it marched to the trenches and relieved the 4th Suffolks in the front line sector immediately south of the one it had previously held. The weather was still the principal enemy, being as cold and wet as ever, and the trenches were still waterlogged. After 48 hours the front and support companies changed over, and when the four miserable days of the tour of duty had passed, the battalion was relieved by the Worcestershires.

Cases of frost-bite and trench feet were still numerous. By far the greatest sufferers were the Yeomanry who had been deprived of their breeches at the base and fitted out in our uniform. The kilt is an admirable garment even for the trenches despite that when wet or muddy it cuts the back of the knees with very painful results. It keeps one warm in the right place, but one needs to be broken in to it gradually. Our Yeomen after having worn the kilt for only a few days were exposed to the icy wind, and often up to the waist in water. Small wonder then that the great majority of them, splendid fellows of excellent physique though they were, could not stand the ordeal. The whole division was losing heavily from frost-bite and trench feet, the 100th Brigade being the greatest sufferers. In the Brigade the Glasgow Highlanders had the largest number of cases, entirely due to so many of the men wearing the kilt for the first time.

It was not the kilt in itself that was responsible for the trouble, because the 2nd Argylls in our own division had exceptionally few cases. Men were being exposed to needless suffering and the battalion's efficiency was being impaired because the authorities at the base, or elsewhere, deemed it expedient to draft men from our own second line into trousered units, and send men unused to the kilt to us. In one instance a draft of 200 Glasgow Highlanders from the second line were sent to a battalion of Royal Scots. When these men were ordered to discard the kilt, they were so angry that serious trouble might have arisen if it had not been that one of their own old officers, Captain Thomson, was attached to divisional headquarters, and on being sent for he managed to show the indignant Highlanders what their duty was, not only to the Service, but to their own Regiment.

Incidentally, another 200 men went to the London Scottish. On being relieved the Highlanders went back into brigade reserve, occupying dug-outs at a place rejoicing in the name of Asquith Flats. On Christmas Day the whole battalion was occupied clearing the mud in 'Agile Avenue' and lost two men by shell-fire.

The 33rd Division's tour of duty in the line on this occasion proved to be a short one. The 14th East Surreys took over and the battalion marched to the bus terminus at Maurepas and was carried back to Camp. The following day it proceeded by train to Longpre west of Amiens, completing the Journey by road to Gorenflos.

Gorenflos was of the usual type of small agricultural village. Billets were quite good and estaminets, of a sort, numerous. The great thing was to get away from the mud, and to have a roof over one's head; the Highlanders were prepared to enjoy themselves while they could. The sergeants' Hogmanay celebration took place in the school, and after dinner the officers, joined them. Whisky was conspicuous on the wine list and a pleasant evening was spent. As was fitting, New Year 1917 was played in by the pipe band; whereupon a determined but unsuccessful attempt was made to burst the big drum. The bonds of discipline were relaxed just as they had been a year ago, but like the skin of the big drum they were not broken. It is a poor heart that never rejoices! New Year's day was observed as a holiday; there was a football match in the afternoon, followed by a concert and fireworks in the evening. The organizer of the pyrotechnic display was Captain Teddy McCosh, whose raw material consisted largely of German flares.

Work commenced next day with a run at seven a.m., and from then on the training programme was carried out. On the 15th General Pinney saw the battalion and presented medal ribbons to Captain E. McCosh, Captain J.R. Lamberton, and 2nd Lieut. Marchant, who had all won the Military Cross, and to Private Walter Pryde the Military Medal. A cross-country run was held in which the G.H. came in second. The inhabitants of Gorenflos had been a little lukewarm in their reception of the battalion its arrival — it was said that they had not been well pleased with the conduct of previous visitors but when the

Highlanders marched off to entrain at Longpre they left good friends behind them, in spite of — or perhaps because of — the New Year celebration.

It was now back to the Somme once more, and the first four days in that dismal region were spent at Bray. Although the village had been knocked about a good deal by shell-fire, some of the inhabitants were still there and the battalion was comfortably billeted. The situation in front was unchanged, but it was reported that the enemy had made several raids, in some of which he had succeeded in getting away with prisoners.

On the 24th the battalion moved up the river to Suzanne, and three days later took over the trenches from the 4th Suffolks east of Bouchavesnes. The new sector was astride the road to Peronne, which lay in the Somme valley about 5,000 yards away. Keen frost had set in, and hard weather lasted throughout the four days tour of duty. The position was exposed to the cold wind, but anything was better than the usual persistent rain. The men in the trenches managed to fare very well as their meals could be got up quickly through the frost-bound trenches and supplied to them hot. The hard ground on the other hand was the gunners' opportunity and there was some loss from shell-fire. Even more troublesome were the enemy's trench mortars, which got two direct hits on the support trench, causing seven casualties. Snow fell on the 30th and on the night of the 31st white trenches were handed over to the Worcestershires. After four days in support the Highlanders took over the trenches again. The enemy's trench mortars were still active and three men were wounded during the relief.

It was decided to raid the enemy's trenches on both sides of the Peronne road on the night of 7 February. The objects of the raid were:—

- (a) To destroy enemy trenches and dug-outs.
- (b) To kill or make prisoner as many of the enemy as possible.
- (c) To obtain identification of all kinds from equipment, clothing, etc.
- (d) To capture machine guns, arms, etc.
- (e) To search trenches for indication of mining, gas installations, etc., destroy any such and bring back any articles necessary to prove same.

Colonel Menzies issued orders for the raid on the 5th. They were on similar lines to those written for the famous 'Duck's Bill', and were very complete, occupying five pages of type-written foolscap. Nothing was left to chance: artillery, stokes gun, machine gun, Lewis gun and rifle grenade barrages were arranged to cover the assault, and a box barrage to protect the raiders while in occupation of the enemy trenches,

The proceedings opened on the 6th when our field guns started as unostentatiously as possible to cut the enemy's wire, which was very thick. That night there was a good deal of fire on both sides, and on the 7th it almost seemed that the enemy suspected something, for his artillery was unusually active. Our gunners too were busy completing, their work on his wire.

Meanwhile the raiders, 2nd Lieuts. W.M. Coulter, J.R. Brown and A. Wilson, 72 Highlanders and 6 sappers of the 222nd Field Company Royal Engineers were studying their orders, trench maps and aeroplane photographs, and organizing and instructing their parties. Each man carried two bombs in addition to those carried by the regular bombers. Unnecessary equipment, including entrenching tools and anything that jungled, was discarded. White jackets had been provided to make the raiders as inconspicuous as possible against the background of snow, but these were not used, as the snow had been scattered by the shelling. Bayonets had been dulled as a bright moon was expected, and finally all articles of value, or papers that could be of use to the enemy, were left behind.

A busy day was spent by 2nd Lieut. A.H. Harris, Lewis gun officer, finding positions and targets for his guns. The signal officer, 2nd Lieut. R.C. Reid, completed his arrangements for establishing communication by telephone with the raiders as soon as they reached their objective. A company of Worcestershires was placed at Colonel Menzies' disposal as a reserve. Zero was fixed as 11 p.m., and the whole operation was to occupy twenty-five minutes.

At the point where the Peronne road cut our front line, there was a 'T'-shaped sap extending on both sides of the road. The enemy had a little sap on the left of the road — our left — and here he had a short length of trench immediately behind his front line and connected with it at three points. Some distance further to the left his line bulged forward, and here a machine gun emplacement — giving enfilade fire across his front and covering the road — was strongly suspected. On the right of the road

behind his front line was a white mound, which excited the curiosity of higher authority. A little beyond this a communication trench led to his support trench about 150 yards behind.

As soon as it was dark a few men crept out from the 'T' sap and cut three gaps in the wire in front. The raiders by now were stealthily coming up, and by 10.45 p.m. they were assembled in the sap. Nerves were at high tension; raids were by no means always successful no matter how carefully they were planned, and the cost of failure was always very heavy.

At eleven o'clock the barrage opened. Shells whistled overhead and crashed around and into the enemy's trenches, and machine guns rattled; the raiders climbed out of the sap, ran forward and lay down on the fringe of the barrage about fifty yards short of the enemy trench. They were organized in three parties, those on the flanks being in two lines. The commander of the raid, 2nd. Lieut. Coulter, was in the centre, 2nd Lieut. Brown commanded the right and 2nd Lieut. Wilson the left.

The Lewis guns of the battalion sprayed the enemy's parapet on both flanks, but could not reach the raiders' point of entry for fear of hitting our own men, however a gun belonging, to the 1st Queens on the right had been placed well forward in a sap from which it could enfilade the enemy's parapet. This gun opened fire at zero plus three minutes and fired for one minute. The raiders were to assault at zero plus four. They had got into position without loss. As they advanced, the enemy had put up a red and white flare in front of them and green ones on the flanks; at the same time a machine gun had opened on them from the right, but our stokes battery put it out of action almost immediately — an excellent piece of work.

After four minutes the barrage lifted to the second line and the flanks. Simultaneously the Highlanders dashed forward.

Brown's party lost direction slightly and breaking through the wire entered the trench on the left of the road instead of to the right of it, as had been intended. At first no Germans could be seen. The raiders went along towards the right examining the saps, in one of which a sentry with fixed bayonet was found. He attempted to defend himself and had to be killed. Soon the Highlanders bumped into about a dozen Germans who tried to escape into a dugout. At least four of these were put out of action, two were captured, and the remainder got to earth. As they refused to surrender, the sappers put explosive boxes into the dugout and destroyed it. Another dugout was found in the communication trench; voices were heard. inside, but here again the Germans would not come out, and the dug-out had to be blown up.

Coulter's centre party and Wilson's left party also got into the trench without opposition. Coulter established his headquarters in a breach in the parapet and his two signallers tried to get into communication with battalion headquarters. The telephone line had been out so a runner was sent back with a report that all was going well.

Wilson and his men went along the trench to the left. The barrage had apparently driven all the enemy underground, for at first none could be found on the trenches. Several dug-outs, in which they were suspected of hiding, were bombed. Further along, some Germans were seen. The Highlanders gave them a shower of bombs and rushed forward. The Germans however got away, presumably down the steps of a dugout. More bombs were thrown after them. Wilson then went along to look for the machine gun, closely followed by Private J. Douglas, his leading, bayonet man, and M. Sandford, a bomber. Three Germans were found at the emplacement. Wilson shot them and captured the gun. He then sent back to Sergt. Board, the commander of his support, for the two sappers who came up and demolished the emplacement. The party then made its way back along the trench carrying the gun.

Meanwhile Coulter at the centre of operations anxiously watched the minutes passing. Time was almost up when he saw a light away on the left which he took to be the lighting of the fuse at the emplacement, for the explosion followed a few seconds later. He had by now received reports of their progress from both flanking parties, and at 11.22 p.m. he ordered his bugler to sound a succession of 'G's', the rallying call. The party from the right reported complete, the centre party had had one man wounded, but the left party had not been so fortunate. One man had been killed on the way to the emplacement. On the way back Wilson stopped to take off his identification disc and while doing so this very gallant officer was killed by a shell.

When Sandford and his sappers arrived with the gun, the signal to retire was given by whistle, and the whole force lost no time in recrossing no-man's land. This was not done however, without further loss, for the enemy's guns were now busy and one of the sappers with the gun was killed and Sandford was

wounded. Coulter carried Sandford in and the whole party reached our trenches with a total loss of one officer and two men killed, and three men wounded.

For some time our guns kept up a reduced rate of fire, then gradually returned to normal. The enemy's artillery likewise became quieter, and the raiders went back to dug-outs in the support trenches for their well-earned rest.

Only two prisoners had been brought back, one of whom was wounded in our trenches by a shell. However, fairly heavy losses had been inflicted on the enemy, some damage had been done to his trenches and valuable identifications had been secured. It had been ascertained that the white mound was merely chalk excavated from a dug-out. The raid, therefore, although marred by our own losses was an undoubted success, and brought immediate congratulations from Brigadier-General Baird and Major-General Pinney. If the spoils were not as great as they had been at Mad Point eight months before, at least the spirit of the battalion had been proved to be the same as ever.

The night after the Bouchavesne Raid the 2nd R.W.F. took over and the Highlanders moved back to Camp 19, Suzanne, doing the first five miles on foot and the remainder by bus. In the morning General Baird visited the battalion and warmly congratulated the raiding party on their exploit. On Sunday, 11th February, both He and General Pinney attended the battalion church parade which was held in the open. After the service the later presented Military Medal ribbons to No.4098 Pte. Douglas, No.4527 Pte. Houston, No.4927 Pte. Bennett, No.4199 Pte. Paterson, No.6033 Pte. Maxwell, and No.1619 Bugler Logan. These ribbons could be presented at once as the M.M. was awarded by the Corps Commander.

While it was at Suzanne Major J.F. Daly, 6th H.L.I. was attached to the battalion.

On 16th February the Highlanders went into support trenches near Clery-sur-Somme, relieving the 4th King's Liverpools, and four days later took over the front line from the Worcestershires in the sector immediately north of the river. A thaw had come with disastrous results to the trenches, but the weather remained dry and the enemy docile.

Colonel Menzies was now busy on plans for an other raid on a slightly more ambitious scale, to take place on the night of March 3rd, during the battalion's next tour in the front line. The detailed scheme was submitted to brigade headquarters on February 23rd.

After four days of comparative peace the river sector was handed back to the Worcestershires, who on the night 27th/28th twice raided the German trenches most brilliantly, bringing back twenty-three prisoners belonging to the 2nd Guard Grenadier Regiment. The Highlanders relieved them that evening. The Boche was by this time in a thoroughly nervous condition. At 8 p.m. they put S.O.S. signals along their front line, and their guns responded to this appeal by an hour's heavy bombardment of our trenches, which resulted in some casualties.

On March 1st our guns commenced wire-cutting operations in preparation for the proposed raid. Next day however, the orders were cancelled and the raid did not take place.

The battalion was relieved by the 20th Royal Fusiliers on the night of March 4th and marched back to Frise, about four miles down the river, leaving two companies behind at Omiecourt-les-Clery in a support position. The following day the reunited battalion moved to Camp 19 Suzanne, and on the 6th marched fifteen miles right back out of the battle area to Corbie, at the junction of the Somme and the Ancre. The 33rd Division had been relieved and now left the Somme battle-fields. The three winter months had been a time of hardship. Life in the trenches had often almost reached the limit of human endurance; life in the rest camps was not much better. But the troops, in spite of their knowledge that victory was still a long way off, continued to endure.

Chapter 14

THE BATTLE OF ARRAS

The Allies' plans for 1917 as arranged between Haig and Joffre provided for simultaneous offensives on all fronts. As early as possible in February the British with greatly augmented forces would resume operations extending from the Somme, where the enemy was in an obviously difficult position, right up to Vimy Ridge. The French would cooperate between the Somme and the Oise.

However there was a political crisis at home in December 1916 which resulted in Mr. Lloyd George succeeding Mr. Asquith as Prime Minister. There was also a reorganization of the French Government, and General Joffre was replaced by General Nivelle who had made a great reputation for himself at Verdun, where towards the end of the year he had scored spectacular successes against an enemy seriously weakened by his own prolonged offensive there and by the British attacks on the Somme.

Nivelle proposed to transfer the main effort in 1917 from British into French hands, and this involved a demand that an additional thirty miles of front should be taken over by Sir Douglas Haig. An attack was to be made by the British at Arras to draw the German reserves, and then would follow a tremendous French offensive on the Aisne in which Nivelle expected to break completely through the German front within forty-eight hours. Our General Staff in London and our Commander-in-Chief in the field both strongly advised the War Cabinet against the adoption of this plan, but Sir Douglas was instructed to conform.

Fortunately the troops knew nothing about these matters in February 1917, nor for many months afterwards. The Glasgow Highlanders settled down to enjoy their rest at Corbie. Colonel John Menzies went on leave and Major Daly assumed temporary command. The next few days were spent in company training. General Pinney inspected the battalion, a church parade was held in the theatre, and the Corps Commander held a parade for presentation of medal ribbons, the Highlanders providing a guard of honour. On the 16th a draft of one officer and 30 other ranks joined, on the 24th four officers and 28, and on the 25th two more officers. Colonel John Graham, DSO, H.L.I. joined and took over command. At football the Highlanders again carried all before them, and Major-General Pinney presented cigarette cases to the team.

Monday 2nd April saw the battalion on the move once more. It marched to Coisy, arriving there in a snowstorm. The following day it continued its march north spending one night at Beauval, one at Meuvillette and two at Mondicourt, where it enjoyed a bath. On Saturday it marched to Souastre, where it had been in September, and on Sunday to the ruins of Bienvillers.

A month before, the front line had been only a mile and a half from Bienvillers, but now it was more than ten miles away. On March 15th, the very day that the final agreement was concluded for carrying out General Nivelle's plan, the Germans had commenced their retreat to the Hindenburg Line. If the original Joffre-Haig plan had been adhered to, the Allies would have been ready to strike in February and the Germans would have been caught either before or during their retreat.

Now they were out of a dangerous salient, out of their old battered trenches, back in enormously strong lines of trenches running practically straight from Arras to the neighbourhood of Soissons, with a deep belt of devastated country in front of them. Hindenburg and Ludendorf by their action had robbed us of all the tactical advantages gained on the Somme, and their success was largely due to the interference of our politicians in the conduct of military operations.

The Battle of Arras was opened on April 9th when the Third Army (Allenby) with three corps of four divisions, and the Canadian Corps of the First Army (home) attacked the old German trench system from a point just north of Croisilles to the Vimy Ridge inclusive. General Allenby had one corps and one cavalry corps in reserve. The infantry assault had been preceded by a five days bombardment so there could be no surprise, but supported by a creeping barrage and assisted by sixty tanks our troops achieved a rapid success.

By night we had gained a footing in the enemy's third line and taken a large number of prisoners. In the centre the 9th, 34th and 51st Divisions did particularly well, and the 4th Division, passing through,

seized Fampoux on the north bank of the Scarpe, a penetration of 6,000 yards. On the left the Canadians took the greater part of the Vimy Ridge, but on the right the attack was held up on the Hindenburg Line.

At Bienvillers the Glasgow Highlanders were waiting for their turn to go into the battle. Extra ammunition and bombs were issued and surplus kit was dumped.

Next day progress was slower owing to the difficulty of getting up guns and material, and the presence of enemy reserves. Monchy le Preux on the high ground south of the Scarpe held out till the 11th. The 4th Australian and 62nd Divisions of Fifth Army (Gough) were now launched into the battle. Preceded by tanks they attacked Bullecourt from the south and broke into the Hindenburg Line. Heavy counter-attacks drove them back and the tanks were lost. Meanwhile the Third Army could make no further progress, being held up at Heninel and Wancourt.

These villages were taken on the 12th, together with 2,000 yards of the Hindenburg Line south of the river Cojeul. The initial impetus of the attack was now gone, the enemy's reserves were resisting strenuously and counter-attacking.

At Bienvillers Colonel John Menzies had rejoined on the 11th and taken over command from Colonel Graham. On the 12th the Highlanders marched through the devastated area to Boisleux-au-Mont and bivouacked there in the rain. The enemy's work of destruction had been thoroughly done: villages had been destroyed, wells polluted, bridges blown, up and trees felled across the roads.

The 33rd Division relieved the 21st which had been on the extreme right of the attack, the Highlanders taking over from the 7th Leicestershires in the line north of Croisilles. There were no trenches worthy of the name, the positions being chiefly sunken roads. B and D Companies were in front, C in support and A in reserve, battalion headquarters being near a cross roads 500 yards north-west of Croisilles.

On the immediate front conditions were fairly quiet, but heavy fighting was going on to the north. The 19th Brigade had been detached to cooperate with the 21st Division in two attacks. The first of these on the 15th had failed, but on the night of the 15th the 1st Cameronians established themselves in the Hindenburg Line.

The weather, which had been good for a few days, broke down on the 16th with heavy showers of rain and sleet. The bombardment tended to increase as the days passed; nevertheless a lot of work was done to improve the position from the point of view of security and comfort. In both these respects the enemy was at an enormous advantage over our troops.

The 'Hindenburg Line' consisted of a highly fortified front and second line with concrete machine gun emplacements, some of them two storeys high, about every fifty yards along it. Both lines were defended in front by strands of the thickest wire to a depth of about twenty yards, and were connected by the most complete system of tunnels and dug-outs that has ever been seen. The country in front was denuded even of cover from the weather, and cover from fire had to be laboriously constructed as the battle progressed.

On the 19th the 19th Brigade relieved the 100th, the Highlanders handing over to the 5th Scottish Rifles. The brigade was now a divisional reserve, and the Highlanders moved back to a sunken road behind Croisilles and occupied bivouacs and such shelter as could be improvised. Next day a further move was made to Boyelles, three miles west of Croisilles, and after nightfall the Highlanders relieved the 5th Scottish Rifles in the line, A and B Companies taking over outpost positions with D in support and C in reserve.

These moves were preliminary to an attack on a nine-mile front from Croisilles to Gavrelle which was ordered for the 23rd. The plan, as far as concerned the 33rd Division, was for the 98th Brigade to attack along the Hindenburg Line from the north while the 1st Queens of the 100th Brigade assaulted it frontally in the Sensee Valley. During the 22nd our guns bombarded the enemy heavily and next morning the attack was launched.

Both attacks met with considerable initial success. The Queens quickly established themselves in the Hindenburg Line; the 1st Middlesex and 2nd Argylls of the 98th Brigade made good progress, capturing 240 prisoners, but the leading companies of both battalions were cut off by the enemy and eventually destroyed after making a heroic resistance. The position of the Queens, heavily engaged in a bombing fight, was now desperate. The enemy was able to bring up unlimited supplies of bombs through his tunnels, the Queens on the other hand had to depend on carrying parties of the 16th K.R.R., which lost

heavily crossing the fire-swept ground. The unequal fight went on till 11 a.m., when a determined counter-attack drove the Queens back to their original position.

Further north our troops had gained the high ground west of Cherisy and the villages of Guemappe, Monchy le Preux, Roeux, and Gavrelle, but determined, enemy counter-attacks drove them out of the first three of those positions — all south of the river Scarpe.

In the evening the attack was renewed by the 98th Brigade and the troops to the north. Guemappe was retaken but elsewhere no progress was made. The enemy counter-attacked repeatedly during the night and almost succeeded in reaching the headquarters of the 98th Brigade; indeed a message was received by Colonel Menzies that the Germans had broken through. C Company was accordingly moved into a position covering the guns, but no enemy appeared.

Next day the battle continued, but no further attempt was made to advance against the Hindenburg Line. Further north however, the enemy's resistance weakened and our troops were able to reoccupy their objectives south of the Arras-Cambrai road. The enemy continued to shell the Highlanders' posts and got a direct hit with a 5.9 on a dugout occupied by Headquarters' signallers. At night the programme was varied by a lachrymatory gas-shell bombardment.

A daylight patrol was sent out to find out if the Hindenburg Line was still occupied. It was. The patrol came under machine gun fire, but managed to get back with the loss of one man wounded.

These operations resulted in extremely heavy losses to the 33rd Division, which probably had the hardest task of any in the battle. The Glasgow Highlanders losses were of course light as compared with those of the battalions actively engaged. The Division was withdrawn from the line, and that night battalion handed over to the 6th Leicesters and marched back to Bienvillers, leaving behind one officer and fifty men to bury the dead. The march of about twelve miles was not completed till four o'clock next morning.

The Highlanders remained at Bienvillers till the end of the month. Two drafts joined amounting in all to one officer and 151 other ranks. On Sunday 29th, Church Parade was held in the open, and next evening the 'Shrapnels' gave a concert. This entertainment was also held in the open, there being no cover available.

On May 1st the battalion marched north-east to Ficheux, spent the night there in bivouacs and continued the journey next day to Boisieux St. Marc near Boyelles. As it was expected that some days would be spent here, the Division being still out of the line, a rifle range was improvised and a programme of musketry training was carried through under Captain Buchanan. This was very necessary because continued trench warfare tended to make the infantryman rely too much on the bomb, and forget that he carried a rifle.

Meanwhile, training was not allowed to interfere too much with preparations for the great 33rd Divisional Race Meeting. General Pinney gave the diversion his strong support, and the arrangements made by his staff were as usual, thorough. There were plenty of entries for all the races, and facilities for those anxious to back their fancies were thoughtfully provided by some officers who undertook the duties, and obligations, of bookies. The meeting was held at Alette, and proved a great success. While the 33rd Division was resting the fighting continued. General Nivelle's offensive on the Aisne of April 16th had failed disastrously and the Battle of Arras, which had commenced as a subsidiary operation, was continued to cover the confusion of the French. There was now little prospect of any far-reaching success, but it was necessary to keep hammering, at the enemy. The Russian Revolution in March had added to the difficulties of the situation. The Arras offensive therefore, had to go on in a series of attacks with limited objectives, and little chance of results in proportion to the inevitable losses.

On 11th May the Glasgow Highlanders returned to the trenches and occupied posts north of Croisilles facing the Hindenburg Line. Conditions were fairly quiet till the 15th, when the battalion moved back to bivouacs behind Croisilles. Early next morning it was reported that the enemy was withdrawing, and the brigade was ordered to stand by ready to go forward. The report proved to be unfounded and the Highlanders next move was back to Moyenneville on the 17th.

Preparations were now being made for a big attack on May 20th. The 33rd Division's task was to be similar to that of April 23rd. Once more the 98th Brigade was given the flank attack from the north-west, while the 100th brigade was allotted the frontal attack on the Hindenburg Line in the Sensee valley, with the 19th Brigade on its right.

This time three battalions were to be employed, the 2nd Worcestershires, the Glasgow Highlanders, and the 16th K.R.R. The brigadier however, was not content with issuing his usual clear and complete orders; he personally supervised a rehearsal of the operations by the three battalions. Major-General Pinney was also present, and afterwards a conference of commanding officers was held at Brigade Headquarters, when all factors of the situation and possible contingencies were discussed.

At half-past six o'clock in the morning of May 19th brigade operation orders were received, and that evening the battalion moved forward into the battle area. The rendezvous was at Maison Rouge Farm, and here tea was issued. The last stage of the march commenced at 9.30 p.m. As the battalion passed through the ruins of Croisilles and along the banks of the Sensee, it was heavily shelled. Owing to its being in artillery formation there were only eight casualties, and the movement was not interrupted. Assembly trenches had already been dug for the two leading companies, but those behind had to dig themselves in as best they could. This they proceeded to do, and by 2.30 in the morning everything was ready.

Quite close on the right were the Worcestershires, and on the left the K.R.R. The brigade was rather bunched, but was to deploy when it advanced, to cover its 1,500 yards of objective. The two leading companies, D on the right, and C on the left, had the enemy's front line for their objective. Behind them lay A and B with orders to go through and secure the support line. Before dawn, four Lewis guns were pushed forward into, positions in shell holes to cover the advance.

When morning dawned a heavy mist lay on the ground. At three minutes past five the leading companies moved, forward. The going was difficult, as the ground was much ploughed up by shell fire, but the Highlanders advanced steadily and quietly, covered by the mist, and succeeded in getting within twenty yards of the enemy's trench before a shot was fired. Then the enemy saw them, and heavy fire was opened from the German support line and from two concrete machine gun emplacements in the front line. With a shout the Highlanders ran forward, and had little difficulty in breaking through the wire which had been cut to pieces. The front line was almost obliterated. It was unoccupied except for the emplacements.

On the right D Company put the machine gunners out of action, capturing the two survivors. On C Company's front the emplacement was attacked with bombs, and the garrison killed or taken prisoner. The first objective was won, the enemy's front line, or what was left of it, was in our hands. Without loss of time the work of consolidation was commenced and Lewis guns were got into position to cover A and B Companies which were now coming up. A heavy fire was still being kept up from the enemy's second line, and on the left he counter-attacked fiercely with bombs down a communication trench. Our men seemed to hesitate for a moment, but were quickly rallied by Lieut. Sam Coulter who was leading C Company. Shouting "Come on Highlanders" he led them on till he fell dangerously wounded. The situation was saved, however, and Lieut. Greenshields — on whom the command now devolved — completed the work and constructed a block in the trench covering it with Lewis guns.

Meanwhile A and B Companies had gone through, and were advancing to the second line. The mist which had been of such assistance earlier now proved a hindrance. The enemy's fire was very heavy in spite of our barrage, and the two companies suffered severely. By the time it had got about half-way between the first line and the second line wire, the attack was broken up into small parties and nearly all the officers were killed or wounded. The mist and the smoke made it difficult to locate the enemy's trenches, and the formation of the wire caused the various groups under N.C.O's to attack in different directions, some of those on the left getting mixed up with the King's Royal Rifles. As soon as the barrage lifted the survivors pressed forward. Some reached the enemy's trench and drove out or captured the garrison.

By this time Captains A.C. Murray and W.M. Coulter, and Lieuts. W. Morrison and J. McGregor had. been killed, and Lieuts. Glendinning, Proven, and H.O. Munro wounded, the last fatally.

The small groups of Highlanders were now grimly holding on to the positions they had won, but the odds against them were too heavy. Company Sergt. Major McElveney, now in command of A Company, kept the Germans at bay for some time, using their own bombs against them till the supply gave out. Sergt. Armstrong with another group also maintained his position for some time but was driven out and got back wounded to the first line with the survivors of his party about 6 o'clock.

B Company on the left fared no better. It too penetrated the second line, but in such small numbers that a heavy counter-attack drove the survivors back. Thus after about an hour's fighting all that remained

to the battalion was the German front line, and about 25 prisoners taken in the second line. D and C Companies and the survivors of A and B were now hard at work consolidating.

Only four officers remained in the four companies, Lieuts. Greenshields C Company, A.J. Walker and A. Mather D, and J.S. Reid, B.

On the flanks the Worcestershires and King's Royal Rifles had also taken their first objective but had been driven back from the second.

A considerable increase in the enemy's shell fire and persistent sniping from the front and flanks, particularly from a sunken road on the right, was hampering the work of consolidation, but the men continued to dig steadily in spite of some loss. By half-past six the mist had cleared sufficiently to bring the enemy's position into clear view. On the right, in front of D Company, the Germans attempted to attack. Lieut. Walker opened fire and they disappeared back into their trenches. Shortly afterwards large numbers were seen making their way along the sunken road, and these were dispersed with Lewis gun and rifle fire.

Later on in the morning Walker sent a bombing party to the assistance of the Worcestershires whose left was being bombed from a communication trench. The enemy was driven back and a block made in the trench.

During the forenoon Greenshields and Walker continued to organize the defence. By now the supply of bombs was exhausted and the enemy's fire made it almost impossible to bring up more over the six hundred yards of open ground behind. A large number of German stick bombs were collected along the trench and with these our men were rearmed.

It was fortunate that this could be done because in the afternoon the enemy made another bombing attack, this time down the communication trench on the left. Greenshields' men held the block, and after about forty minutes of stiff fighting drove the enemy back, and followed them forty or fifty yards up the trench. About a dozen enemy killed were found and five wounded.

The remainder were forced to take cover in a dugout, from the entrance of which they waved a white flag tied to a bayonet. Greenshields, being doubtful whether to trust this surrender or not took all precautions, and crept forward with his men in a moon-shaped formation. A man could now be seen at the entrance, but as the white flag was no longer in evidence, a bomb was thrown at him. It exploded near him and he jumped up shouting "Kamerad" and holding up his hands. He was secured along with thirteen others, who were sent back under escort.

During the rest of the 20th the enemy contented himself with sniping and shelling. The 19th Brigade was ordered to make another attack on the second line and in the evening the 1st Cameronians and 5th Scottish Rifles went forward covered by the fire of the 100th Brigade. This attack was pressed with great gallantry, but its objective was not gained and the losses were tremendous.

Darkness brought no rest to the weary troops, for the wounded had to be found and carried back. As usual there was no lack of willing workers for this duty. In the forward area the enemy did little to interfere, but further back, particularly along the Sensee River the stretcher bearers had to go through heavy shell fire.

On the 21st there was no movement. The infantry on both sides were probably too exhausted for further effort, but the gunners kept up the game. Our men were thus able to get some rest and to complete the consolidation of the position. Lieut. Greenshields' captured dugout was explored and five wounded Germans were found inside, besides ten killed — including two officers — round the entrance. That night the battalion was relieved by the 2nd Royal Welsh Fusiliers. The relief started at 10.30 p.m. and was completed by 4.30 a.m. After one day in support in the sunken road N.W. of Croisilles the Highlanders moved further back to bivouac at Moyenneville.

In the fighting on May 20th the 100th Brigade had captured and consolidated its first objective, but although in places it had reached its second, it had not been able to maintain itself there. The cost of this limited success was tremendous. The Highlanders lost 7 officers killed, 5 wounded and 2 missing; 58 other ranks killed, 198 wounded and 49 missing, a total of 297. The strength of the four companies when they went into action on the morning of the 20th was 496.

Although some of the killed and wounded belonged to battalion Headquarters which was under heavy shell-fire all the time, the proportion of loss to numbers engaged was exceptionally high and was far beyond what in other wars was regarded as the strain which troops could endure without serious loss

of morale. Our men had stood the strain, and if the bomb fight on the afternoon of the 20th was a test, had proved that their morale was better than the enemy's.

A disturbing feature in the casualty list was the high proportion of officers. The battalion could ill afford to lose such men as Captain W.M. Coulter (killed), who had done so well in the raid at Bouchavesnes, or his brother Sam Coulter (badly wounded). Captain A.C. Murray, also killed, had mobilized with the battalion in 1914, while Captains W.F.M. Donald and R.C. Reid were among the wounded.

On the 24th Major-General Pinney and Brigadier-General Baird both visited the battalion and spoke in the highest terms of the conduct of all ranks.

After a short respite, during which the troops had a bath, and a draft of 78 men joined, the Highlanders moved up into the battle area once more.

The operations were being continued by the 19th Brigade, to which the battalion was temporarily attached. In the evening of 26th May the Highlanders took over the section of the Hindenburg Line which it had won at such cost six days earlier.

The 2nd R.W. F. and 5th S.R. were to make yet another effort next day to secure the enemy's second line. The Highlanders' orders were to support the attack with fire, to bomb up a communication trench called 'Nelly Lane' as soon as the R.W. F. entered the enemy position, and to be prepared to occupy the trenches opposite if the enemy showed any sign of retiring.

When the 19th Brigade went over at 1.55 p.m., our men opened supporting fire with rifles and Lewis guns. After bitter hand-to-hand fighting in front of the German trench, the 19th Brigade was driven back by a heavy counter-attack. Our patrols which had crawled forward found the enemy's line strongly held by 4 p.m. the fighting was over, our losses being one officer and 16 men killed and 15 men wounded. The night was comparatively quiet, but the following day the whole battalion was heavily shelled, and lost three men killed and one officer and eight men wounded.

On the night 28th/29th our brigade relieved the 19th, the Highlanders remaining in their position, but the following night the 2nd Worcestershires took over and we moved back to support in the assembly trenches from which we had attacked on the 20th. Here the battalion remained for two days, and one man killed and two wounded were added to the casualty list. On the night of May 31st it was relieved and marched back to Moyenneville, remaining there one night and moving back to Bienvillers next day.

A respite of about three weeks now followed. Once again the companies had to be reorganized, and promotions made to fill the distressingly large number of vacancies caused by the recent fighting. The optimism of Festubert, Loos and the early days of the Somme were gone. To the troops it might well have seemed that their task was almost hopeless. Attack after attack brought such small and apparently useless gains of territory and such a rapidly-mounting casualty list that from the infantry private upwards there was some excuse for doubting the fitness of those in authority over them — yet, civilians as many had been a few months ago, they stood the strain. If optimism was lost, grim determination took its place. Life in the devastated area afforded few amusements, but such as they were, they were thoroughly enjoyed.

At this time, the transport was billeted among the ruins of Boiry-St.-Martin. One day an old Frenchman turned up with a permit to dig up valuables buried in his garden. He found many willing helpers. After some difficulty, he got his bearings and our transport men got to work. The old man's excitement was tremendous, and the diggers for treasure were nearly as excited as he. He knew no English except sundry oaths which he used freely, especially when the work party fell into the hole on top of him. At length a pot was found filled with francs in silver, then another containing gold. Evidently this was not the principal part of the treasure, for his excitement only increased, until a tin box was discovered filled with papers. This satisfied the old chap; he rewarded his helpers liberally from his store of francs and went off with his tin box as happy as a king.

The Corps Commander visited the battalion and presented ribbons to some of those who had gained awards in the recent fighting. The decorated were:

Lieut. Col. J. Menzies and 2nd Lieut. D.McK. Greenshields, the DSO,

2nd Lieut. S. Coulter, the MC,

No.330117 C.S.M. E. McElveny and No.332055 Sergt. M. Mangan the DCM,

No.330416 Sergt. J. Vine,
No.330469 Sergt. W.M. Hillier,
No.331192 Pte. D.D. Blackwood,
No.331324 Lance-Cpl. H. Aitchison,
No. 331734 Pte. J. McArthur,
No.331422 Lance-Sergt. J. G. Kennedy,
No.331770 Lance-Cpl. W. McEwan,
No.331771 Pte. J. Dollan,
No.332142 Sergt. G. Coubrough,
No.332481 Lance-Cpl. A. Dover,
No.333120 Lance-Cpl. R.F. James the M.M.

After the ceremony the Highlanders moved off by platoons to take over the support line behind Croisilles. The following evening the enemy shelled our positions very heavily, and got a direct hit on B Company's Headquarters. Lieut. Newlove was killed and Major Moss and Lieuts. Glendinning and Gilfillan and twelve men were wounded. The company was withdrawn.

On the evening of the 27th the Highlanders took over the front line from the 5th Scottish Rifles, finding that no forward move had been made since May 20th. It was evident that the Battle of Arras had come very near its inglorious end, for orders were issued that the front line should be rewired. This work occupied three short nights. There was a lot of rain which soon filled the battered trenches with mud. The Queens made a small attack which met with little success.

On the night of June 30th the Highlanders handed over their trenches to 1st East Yorks and marched to Moyenneville, then back to Bienvillers next day. The Battle of Arras was over; the infantry had paid their first instalment of the price of the fatal change of plan in March when Sir Douglas Haig's advice had not been accepted by Mr. Lloyd George.

Chapter 15

YPRES, 1917

At seven o'clock on the morning of July 3rd the Glasgow Highlanders paraded and marched to Harponville, seven miles west of Albert. The weather was now very hot, so to take advantage of the cool of the morning, next day's march to Rainneville commenced at 6.18 a.m. The last stage of the journey was to Crouy on the Somme about ten miles below Amiens. In spite of an even earlier start — 4.40 a.m. — the heat made the march of twenty-four kilometres rather trying, but only one man fell out.

At Crouy one was back in civilization once more, a welcome change after three months in the battle area, and full advantage was taken of it. Passes to Amiens were freely given. A hundred men would go there by train at nine o'clock in the morning, returning the same evening. The men as usual showed their appreciation of this privilege by the care they took not to abuse it, and there were very few cases of over-stayed leave. The amenities of Amiens did not of course take precedence over training, but Colonel John Menzies knew that relaxation was just as essential as training.

This month's rest was one of the best that the battalion had enjoyed for many months. The weather was perfect. The Somme was there for bathing, parades, official and unofficial. Fishing was to be had with the rod or bomb. The battalion soon had friends among the villagers, who in many little ways showed their kindness.

In July 17th and 18th the 33rd Division organized a Horse Show at Cavillon. This was as great a success as the Race Meeting had been, and it was held under happier circumstances. Large numbers of the local people came, as well as officers, British and French, from far and wide.

The Major-General's Cup was won by No.1 Company, Divisional Training A.S.C., and the Glasgow Highlanders got a fair share in the awards, with a first prize in the Pack Animals (ponies) class, and 'commended' in the Pairs L.D. Mules (Ride and Drive) class, while Captain E. McCosh's 'Ginger' was second in the officers' Chargers class.

On August 1st the holiday came to an end. Early in the morning the battalion paraded. It was very wet, but, not wet enough to damp the spirits of the men, who tramped singing through the rain to the station at Pont Remy. By 6 a.m. the transport was entrained and the men packed into trucks. Then followed the usual slow and dreary journey of a French troop train. For twelve hours it wandered on and at length arrived at Dunkerque. The 33rd Division had joined the Fourth Army on the Belgian coast.

It was still raining as the battalion formed up and marched to scattered billets round Teteghem. After one day here it moved into a camp at Ghyvelde, and there met for the first time the 17th H.L.I. (Glasgow Chamber of Commerce Battalion). The 17th had a well-deserved reputation for sport. A football match was arranged for Saturday the 11th of August. A keen game resulted in a win for the Highlanders by four goals to nil. Next day we played the 16th K.R.R. at rugby, winning by 16 points to 5.

On August 17th the 33rd Division relieved the 32nd in the line, the 100th Brigade going into divisional reserve. Next day the Highlanders marched to Kuhl Camp and A Company was attached to the 256th Tunnelling Company as a working party. On the 20th the battalion, less A Company, moved to Coxyde and bivouacked in the open.

The enemy shelled these back areas heavily, particularly at night. Other features of his activity were aeroplane bombing, and a generous use of mustard gas. By keeping clear of buildings, however, the battalion was able to avoid casualties.

After a week at Coxyde the Highlanders marched back to Ghyvelde and on to Pont de Leffrinckoucke and Pont du Chapeau Rouge next day when A Company rejoined. On August 31st it went by train to Watten and marched to billets, in Nortleulinghem. The 33rd Division's short stay on the coast had come to an end; it was wanted elsewhere.

On June 7th, while the Battle of Arras was in its last dismal stage, the Second Army had struck a

great blow at Messines. The infantry attack, following the explosion of nineteen mines under the enemy's positions and backed by a converging concentration of guns, was an immediate success. By nightfall the Wytschaete-Messines ridge was taken and the whole salient flattened out. From his position on this ridge the enemy had dominated ours in the Ypres Salient to the north. Sir Douglas Haig could now carry out the second part of his plan for 1917, the offensive in Flanders.

The Third Battle of Ypres had begun at the end of July. The intention was to drive the enemy from the Belgian Coast and to capture the German submarine bases there. The main attack was entrusted to Sir Hubert Gough's Fifth Army. Sir Herbert Plumer's Second Army was co-operating in the south with the intention of making a smaller advance, and the French First Army to the north was given the task of keeping touch with our advance and protecting that flank.

The first assault was launched on July 31st on a fifteen mile front after a ten days bombardment by 2,300 guns. As usual our troops did well in the first days fighting and the whole line was advanced to a considerable depth. It was on the right of the Fifth Army's attack that the enemy's resistance was greatest. Here, where the famous Menin Road crossed the long Messines-Passchendaele ridge at its highest point, our troops only obtained a footing on the high ground and had to hold their precarious positions against determined counter-attacks. Further north our troops succeeded in getting further, but only about a third of the way to the Passchendaele Ridge, the immediate objective.

The rain started on the afternoon of the attack and continued steadily for four days. The whole battlefield became a swamp and little more progress could be made till September, when there was some improvement in the weather.

The Glasgow Highlanders remained in the Watton area for a fortnight. On September 15th a brigade tactical scheme was carried out, after which General Plumer addressed the assembled officers of the four battalions. The whole brigade then marched past in column of fours — and so to billets.

One of two small drafts had brought the battalion up to full strength. On September 15th it started its march up to the battle front, halting for nights at Broxeele, Steenvoorde and Fontaine Houck near Meteren. These marches were trying owing to the heat. A conference of all commanding officers of the division was held at Berthen. Next day the Highlanders accomplished another stage towards the battle, arriving in the evening at Murrum Bidgee Camp, la Clytte, about four and a half miles south-west of Ypres.

For the next few days all ranks were confined to camp as orders were momentarily expected for another move. To pass the time a football match was played between the officers and sergeants; the result was a draw, three goals each. The same evening the commanding officer delivered a lecture on the present operations and on the part the battalion was to play in them.

A fresh attack had been made the previous day on an eight-mile front from the Ypres-Comines Canal to beyond Langemarck. Despite a further breakdown in the weather fair progress was made, our troops driving the enemy off the ridge between the Canal and the Menin Road, and establishing themselves on the low ground beyond; an advance of about 1000 yards.

On the Menin Road itself an advance of nearly 2000 yards was made to within 1000 yards of Gheluvelt. North of the road part of Polygon Wood was taken. This was the new northern limit of the Second Army's area. Further north the attacks of the Fifth Army met with equal success and a general advance averaging over 1000 yards was made. The enemy although driven back was fighting grimly; during the following days many counter-attacks were made along the battle front, and nowhere was there more desperate fighting than on the Menin Road.

Such was the situation when the time came for the 33rd Division to go into the battle at its most critical point. Once again the impetus of the first attack was expended and the point had been reached when the enemy's resistance was most determined. The 3rd Division was ordered to take over the front line on the night 24th/25th September and attack at dawn on the 26th, with the object of taking Gheluvelt.

On the 23rd the Highlanders, under the command of Major E. McCosh MC, left la Clytte at 8.30 a.m. and moved to Kruisstraat immediately S.W. of Ypres, remaining there till the following afternoon. The battalion was to take over the front line and supports between the Menin Road and Veldhoek to the north of it, with the 2nd Queens on the right and the 2nd Worcestershires on the left. The troops to be relieved were two companies of the 11th West Yorks. and one company of the 11th Sherwood Foresters.

The distance to the front line was five miles as the crow flies, and as the area was under almost

continuous shell fire the whole advance had to be made by platoons at 100 yards distance. A and D Companies, which had been detailed for the front line, led, followed by B and C for support. The way led by Zillebeke, thence up through the devastated woods and copses to the Menin Road. A halt was made for two hours at Bird Cage Hill, and then the march was resumed.

As darkness came on the enemy's fire increased. Before Inverness Copse was reached the platoons were going through a regular barrage, and casualties were becoming serious. At the Copse the platoons picked up guides and set out for their positions through intense darkness lit up by bursting shells, and over ground cut up by derelict trenches and pitted with shell-holes. The barrage continued as intense as ever. All the platoons lost heavily, many of the guides were killed or wounded, and those who were left had the greatest difficulty in finding their way. There was nothing for it but to push on blindly for the front line. All the positions were taken over before dawn.

The situation of the Highlanders in their improvised trenches. was precarious; the losses on the way up had been heavy, but owing to the difficulty of communication, could not be accurately ascertained. There were no communication trenches, and all the telephone wires had been cut. The heavy shell fire pinned the men to their shell holes and made proper organization most difficult.

At 5.15 a.m. the concentration of fire on the front line reached an unparalleled intensity and this continued for a quarter of an hour. Then, supported by aeroplanes which swept our positions with machine gun fire, the enemy's masses of infantry came on, on a front of about two miles.

Lewis gun and rapid rifle fire was opened on them, but still they came on, breaking into our front line where there was desperate hand-to-hand fighting among the shell holes. A and D Companies fought stubbornly, but in several places the enemy broke through; on the right the Highlanders were pressed back, leaving many killed and wounded behind them and some twenty prisoners. As far as the forward companies were concerned, it was a case of each man for himself, but the support companies by sending forward part of C and a few men of B to reinforce and counter-attack, prevented the line from being broken.

On the right the Queens fared even worse than the Highlanders, but on the left the Worcestershires, and beyond them the 98th Brigade, held their ground. The result of the morning's fighting was that our line was pushed back about 400 yards, and the little salient on the Menin Road occupied by the Queens and Highlanders was flattened out. The enemy made no further attack along the road during the afternoon, while an advance against the Worcestershires at 4.30 was held up by shell fire.

A party from headquarters managed to get water and rations from Jackdaw Dump. There were many casualties among the parties carrying ammunition and rations; some of them were never heard of again after leaving battalion headquarters.

Heavy shell fire continued during the evening and night, but no fresh attack was attempted. Major McCosh took advantage of this respite to reorganize the defence, and to arrange plans for the recapture of the ground that had been lost. The key to the enemy's position was a strong point on the front of the Queens which had been lost on the morning of the 25th. It was arranged that this should be attacked by the 1st Queens and the 16th K.R.R., supported by the 1st Cameronians from the 19th Brigade, and that the Highlanders, as soon as this attack developed, should advance and reoccupy the gap — linking up with the 2nd Worcestershires who still held on to their position on the left. No artillery barrage was possible, and there was only one machine gun available for supporting the attack.

When the attack on the strong point started, the Highlanders poured in a heavy flanking fire from Lewis guns and rifles. For a time the advance was held up but our troops, working round the flanks, soon drove the enemy out. About 2.30 p.m., while the Germans from the strong point were making for the rear, a large body of the enemy in front of the Highlanders got out of their trenches and counter-attacked against the strong point. Now was the chance for the Highlanders C Company under 2nd Lieut. Lobban, with two platoons of D Company under Lieut. Millar immediately got out of their holes and charged forward. The enemy did not wait for them, but turned about and followed their comrades from the redoubt in their retreat. Our men pursued them as far as their trench, which was occupied and consolidated.

Meanwhile the supports moved forward 2nd Lieut. McKersie with A Company and the remaining two platoons of D Company, and 2nd Lieut. Ancrum with one platoon of 13, occupied our original front line, while 2nd Lieut. W.R. Glen — who had given very valuable service in organizing the attack — moved the remaining three B Company platoons into a position immediately behind the supports ready to

counter-attack. The operation had been completely successful, the gap was filled, and all the lost ground was regained except for a small portion of the Menin Road.

The enemy, however, was not content with this state of affairs, before very long a mass of infantry appeared on a ridge about 400 yards in front of our new position. As the Germans came on, every rifle and Lewis gun in our line opened fire and soon shattered the counter-attack. This was the enemy's last effort; he had failed to regain the top of the ridge and had lost practically all the ground he had won on the morning of the 25th.

The Highlanders had lost very heavily in the two days' fighting. An estimate of casualties amounted to 8 officers wounded and about 450 other ranks killed, wounded or missing. The greater part of these had fallen on the 25th, and the work of bringing back the wounded had never ceased, in spite of the enemy's heavy and continual shell fire.

As the telephone wires had been cut to pieces, communication had been kept up as far as possible by visual signalling, but this had to be supplemented by the battalion runners who, one and all, had done splendidly carrying their message through an inferno of fire. Among them, Lance-Corporal J. B. Hamilton had carried bandoliers of ammunition several times through the barrage, distributing it to the front line in full view of the enemy at close range.

September 27th passed fairly quietly. In the evening Captain G. H. Warren arrived from the 'Minimum Reserve' with the pipers and drummers and a few others to complete the evacuation of the wounded. While this was being done the enemy's shelling increased again, killing one man and wounding six.

About midnight the 11th Sherwood Foresters took over, and the Highlanders moved back to Dickebusch, the last platoon arriving there at 6a.m. At 8.30 the transport left for Blaringhem west of Hazebrouck and the battalion followed in the evening by train.

While the 33rd Division had been regaining ground on the Menin Road on the 26th, fresh ground had been won on the left. The whole of Polygon Wood had been taken, and further north our troops had reached Zonnebeke.

On September 29th the following special order was issued.:

Special Order of the Day

by

Major-General P. Wood, CB, CMG,
Commanding 33rd Division.

1. I have received the following messages in connection with the operations in which the 53rd Division took part on September 25th, 26th, and 27th, 1917.

1

From: The Field-Marshal Commander-in-Chief,
British Armies in France.

To: General Sir H.C.O. Plumer,
Commanding 2nd Army.

G.H.Q., 27th September, 1917.

'The ground gained by the 2nd Army yesterday under your command, and the heavy losses inflicted on the enemy in the course of the day, constitute a complete defeat of the German forces opposed to you. Please convey to all Corps and Divisions engaged, heartiest congratulations, especially to the 33rd Division whose successful attack following a day of hard fighting, is deserving of all praise.'

II

From: X Corps.

To: 33rd Division.

G.G. 131. 26th September, 1917.

'Following received from General Plumer begins

AAA Please accept congratulations on success of today's operations, and convey them to the troops engaged AAA The 33rd Division have done fine work under extraordinarily difficult circumstances, and the 39th Division have carried out their task most successfully AAA Message ends AAA. The Corps Commander adds his own congratulations.'

2. In circulating the above message, I wish to congratulate all Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and men of the Division, on having gained, by their fine fighting qualities, such marks of

appreciation from the Commander-in-Chief, and from the Army and Corps Commanders.

Captured enemy documents show what efforts the enemy made on the 25th September, 1917, against the front held by the Division between the Ypres-Menin Road and the southern edge of Polygon Wood.

I wish this order to be read on parade to all ranks of the Division: as a mark of my appreciation of their gallant conduct in the past, and as a proof of my confidence in their being able to maintain their high reputation in the future.

P. Wood.

September 29th,
1917.

Major-General,
Commanding 33rd Division.

Distribution made on scale of 1 per Officer, throughout the Division.

General Baird issued the following Special Brigade Order dated. 30th September, 1917.

'I wish to express thanks to all ranks of the Brigade for their gallant behaviour during the recent heavy fighting. They have even more than justified my confidence in their valour and pride in their achievements.'

A.W.F. Baird, Brigadier-General
Commanding 100th Infantry Brigade.

Chapter 16

THE FOURTH WINTER

On October 3rd. Sir Douglas Haig inspected the 100th Brigade and presented medal ribbons. In an inspiring address he spoke of the fine conduct of the 33rd Division and particularly on the successful issue of the desperate fighting on and to the north of the Menin Road. No fewer than six German divisions were reported to have taken part in this attack on the two brigades of the 33rd Division. The four battalions then marched past in column of fours.

After a week's rest the Division commenced its move up; to the line again. On October 5th the Highlanders marched to Longuenesse, and next day to Wizernes to entrain for Bailleul. After passing through the old town it had known so well in 1914 the battalion marched to Shankhill Camp, Neuve Eglise. The weather was now very cold, but the men were comfortably housed in good huts.

Neuve Eglise is situated on a low ridge running east and west about two miles south of Mount Kemmel. The front line was nearly five miles away, beyond the Messines Ridge; the enemy occasionally dropped a few shells round the camp. In addition to training by day, the battalion furnished working parties nightly for digging the Corps Reserve Line, and constructing a mule track for taking supplies forward.

Major A.H. Menzies, DSO, who had been wounded at High Wood in July 1916, took over the command of the battalion from his brother. He had returned to France on July 16th, since when he had served for a time with the battalion and then in command of the 33rd. Divisional Wing — the forward depot through which drafts passed on their way to join their unit. Lieut. Col. John Menzies, who had been in command since Lieut. Col. Darling's death in November 1916, for home.

The Reverend A.J. Gossip also reported for duty as padre on the 14th, and held his first Church parade, immediately after which the battalion moved off to relieve the 5th Scottish Rifles in brigade reserve among the ruins of Messines. The village, or what remained of it, lay at the southern end of the famous ridge which bears its name. It commanded the ground for miles east, west and south, It had been strongly defended by the Germans who had held, it from 1914, when the Highlanders in the trenches in front of Kemmel village had faced them, till driven off in Jun 1917.

All that now remained above ground level was the ruin of one house which refused to fall further — because the Huns had cunningly built within its walls a most perfect concrete pill box, obviously the H.Q. of his front line defences, It was now used as H.Q. for the battalion in brigade reserve, the men being bivouacked around the village. The pill box had, one great disadvantage due to its German origin — its entrance faced what was now the front,

A rather humorous incident occurred here one night. A young subaltern fresh from home was being brought up to the battalion. A shell arrived at battalion H.Q. about the same time as, he did.: the explosion blew him through the entrance, and he landed on the floor all of a heap in front of the C.O. Colonel Menzies expressed the hope that he was not badly hurt. He jumped to his feet, assured him that he was not, and apologised most profusely for entering battalion H.Q. in such an unceremonious manner

After four days at Messines, during, which the position was persistently shelled, the Highlanders took over the left front sector from the 16th K.R.R. The line was on the low ground beyond the ridge, fully a mile-and-half east of the village. The only communication trench,, 'Fanny Trench' was little more than a duckboard track, on which one was under observation the whole way down. It joined the support line at Gapaard, a 'poisonous' place where the enemy shelling was incessant, converting, the ground into a quagmire. From Gapaard forward was just a swamp. The trenches had to be continually pumped, but in most of the bays the mud and water reached up to the fire step. On the left there was an almost impassable gap and touch with the next battalion was kept by an occasional patrol.

On the night following the relief a patrol of a corporal and three men went out and failed to return. It must have lost its way in the mist and blundered into the German trenches.

The four days tour in the line at Gapaard ended and the battalion marched back to Canteen Corner Camp, Neuve Eglise. From here it again supplied working parties until the 29th when it moved by bus to

St. Jean, northeast of Ypres, and was attached to the 3rd Canadian Division. The Canadians were preparing, to attack the Passchendaele Ridge and required working parties for their artillery. The attack which was made next day brought our troops to the outskirts of Passchendaele village. While on this duty the battalion had some casualties; one evening two tremendous shells, burst in the camp, killing three men and wounding three others. The 2nd Argylls took over and the Highlanders moved back to Bulford Camp, Neuve Eglise.

Major General Wood inspected the battalion and presented Military Medal Ribbons, twenty-three of which had been awarded for the Menin Road fighting.

On the afternoon of the 7th the Highlanders marched over the Messines Ridge again and relieved the 2nd R.W.F. in the front line at Gapaard. During this spell there was a good deal of shelling and the enemy secured a direct hit on a pillbox which was used as the centre company's H.Q..

Rain made the trenches very wet, particularly on the left, where the pumps had to be continually employed. The enemy's infantry sent over showers of rifle grenades, and on the 9th one man was killed and five were wounded by them. Our men retaliated. Heavy shelling continued, and large sections of the fire trench were practically destroyed; the rain also contributing in no small degree to the damage. On relief the battalion went back to Swayne's Farm on the ridge about 500 yards north of Messines.

The men had scarcely got settled down when a very severe mustard gas bombardment suddenly came down on them. The 'gas discipline' of the battalion was thoroughly tested. It came through the ordeal with flying colours, for so quickly were all precautions taken that only three men were affected and these only slightly.

The arrival of a reconnoitring party of Australian officers was evidence that the 33rd Division was about to be relieved, and next day the 52nd Australian Infantry Battalion took over. The Highlanders moved back to Neuve Eglise and three days later marched to Locre, then on to Brandhoek, on the 17th. The 33rd Division was only being taken away from the Messines Ridge to be put on the Passchendaele Ridge — out of the frying pan into the fire'.

The Third Battle of Ypres was over. It had resulted in the British occupation of the whole ridge east of Ypres from Gheluvelt. (exclusive) to a point 1,200 yards north of Passchendaele. Beyond Passchendaele the line went back on the low ground leaving a pronounced bulge 2,000 yards deep by about 3,000 yards broad at the extreme point of the now greatly enlarged Ypres Salient.

The 100th Brigade moved forward on November 25th, the Glasgow Highlanders marching through Ypres to Potijze about a mile beyond on the Zonnebeke road, and remaining there till the 30th, when the brigade took over the line. For the next four days the battalion was in brigade reserve with H.Q. at

Boethoek, B Company at Abraham Heights, and the other three at Hamburg in what had been the front in October before the ridge had been taken. The forward companies worked in the trenches, principally in 'Dandy' communication trench, while B Company carried up material.

The early hours being the most peaceful of the twenty-four, work started at 6 a.m. Peace however, was only a matter of degree, for bombardments by 5.9's were almost constant day and night. The tracks of duckboards and sleepers, which were the only means of communication through this shell pitted muddy wilderness, were continually being destroyed. Fortunately frost set in before the Highlanders were due to take over the front line.

At 9 p.m. on December 3rd the battalion marched up the duckboard track to Passchendaele. It was a frosty night with a bright moon which made the relief much easier than it would otherwise have been. Before midnight the relief was complete and the Highlanders found themselves for the first time in occupation of what had been the village of Passchendaele.

Probably no decision of Sir Douglas Haig's was more open to criticism than his determination to continue the Third Battle of Ypres till the Passchendaele Ridge had been won. The cost of carrying on the battle through the terrible weather of this winter was enormous, both in life and material. The gain was a ridge, which in Scotland would scarcely be noticed. A few more miles of Belgian territory had been won, but our infantry were left in a dreary wilderness, with miles of almost impassable country behind them.

The way up to the front line was along miles of duckboard tracks through a sea of mud in which it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that, at no place could one see a shellhole which was not touching, another. Except when the ground was frozen hard, the troops had to keep to these tracks which wound in

and out among the shellholes — and sometimes over them on trestles. Getting heavily equipped men along at night was a matter of very great difficulty, apart altogether from the fact that, the tracks — which could not be hidden — were well known to the enemy, and were constantly under fire.

The front line at Passchendaele was merely a line of posts in shellholes on the forward slope of the ridge. Communication, lateral and from front to rear, was impossible by day and difficult by night, when it was only too easy to lose one's way and blunder into one's enemy as happened not infrequently on both sides. Altogether the place was probably as near an approach to the conditions of hell as civilization has yet succeeded in achieving on earth.

Within two hours of the take-over two Germans who had got lost walked into our lines and were taken prisoner. Before dawn snow fell, and a thaw set in making the ground worse than ever. The enemy's guns never ceased. Our men occupied themselves in strengthening their posts and linking up the shellholes between them.

On the evening of the 6th another German walked into our lines and was taken. That night the 98th Brigade took over, the 1st Middlesex relieving the Highlanders, who marched down the track to Potijze and got a train in the morning on the light railway at St. Jean. An hour's run brought the battalion to Brandhoek where it occupied Erie Camp. The weather was still very cold and wet. On Sunday Church Parade was held in the Y.M.C.A. hut. Next day the battalion moved to Winnezele eight miles west of Poperinghe, remained there for three days and returned to Poperinghe on the 13th.

'Pop' was still a busy town; the inhabitants were gradually evacuating it, but it held a large military population and its position behind the Salient meant a constant movement of troops through its streets. The Highlanders occupied good billets in the 'Kloisters' for eight days. They were not permitted, however, to give undivided attention to the fleshpots of 'Pop' — its canteens, clubs, or concert parties — for each morning 16 officers and 575 other ranks were detailed for work under the gunners up at Abraham Heights.

Each morning they paraded in the dark at 3 a.m., took the light railway to Wieltje two miles northeast of Ypres, and completed the journey to the scene of their labour along three-and-a-half miles of duckboards. It was hard and sometimes dangerous work. At noon the party returned to Wieltje and got a train home.

The 33rd Division was fortunate in being taken out of the line for Christmas and New Year. On December 21st the Highlanders moved to the Steenvoorde area and went into its old billets at Winnezele, where a very merry Christmas — with the appropriate snow — was spent.

On Christmas 1914 at Locon the Highlanders, full of confidence in themselves and the future, and proud of having got to France in the van of the Territorial Force, were really enjoying the war. Christmas 1915 was spent in the front line among the Cuinchy brickstacks. After fourteen months of war, they regarded themselves as veterans. Disillusioned they may have been, but probably most of them were still enjoying the war. The new army was coming out and hope was high that great things would be done in 1916.

The shadow of the disappointment and the frightful losses of the Battle of the Somme hung over Christmas 1916; spent in the line in that dismal region. If hope of a speedy victory had faded, there was still confidence that it would come sooner or later. But few could have honestly said that they were enjoying the war. What can be said of Christmas 1917? Another year had passed, victory seemed further off than ever.

Russia was out of the war, Rumania had been completely defeated, and Italy had suffered disaster. Better news had just come from Palestine, where Allenby had taken Jerusalem. In Mesopotamia also, our arms had been successful.

The Western Front, however, was the one which mattered and here the prospect was not bright. Arras and Ypres III had been a tremendous strain. The cost seemed out of all proportion to the successes gained. Sir Julian Byng had attacked at Cambrai on November 20th. success was due to surprise and the skilful use of tanks. But it was short-lived; there were not sufficient reserves to exploit it, nor even to hold all the conquered territory. German counter-attacks reduced the area gained to about a half, while in the south we lost five miles of our original front line; the enemy penetrating about two miles, taking Villers Guislain and the Targelle Ravine to the south of it.

Just as Arras and Ypres III had been fought to help the French in their recovery, so Cambrai was

fought to take pressure off the Italians. In addition five British and six French divisions were sent to stiffen the Italian front. It was obvious that a tremendous number of German troops would be brought from the Russian to the Western Front, and there was no evidence that Sir Douglas Haig's forces would be increased in proportion. The strength of the British divisions was actually about to be decreased by the reduction of each brigade from a four to a three-battalion formation.

While the immediate outlook was not bright, help was to be expected sooner or later from America. In the meantime the troops had confidence in their Commander-in-Chief, although they may have been bewildered by his strategy.

Chapter 17

ON PASSCHENDAELE RIDGE

Strategic considerations did not mar the enjoyment of New Year's Day, which was another holiday for the Glasgow Highlanders. A football match was played against the 18th H.L.I., champions of the 35th Division, the result being a win for the Highlanders by two goals to nil. Next day they beat the 2nd Worcestershires in the 33rd Divisional Tournament.

The end of the holiday came on January 4th when the battalion went by train to Erie Camp, Brandhoek. On the 6th it went further forward by bus through Ypres to Potijze. After two days in Whitby Camp there it relieved the 1st Cameronians in support of the left Passchendaele sector, being temporarily attached to the 19th Brigade. The area was swarming with working parties; these were evidently spotted by an enemy aeroplane which came over, for a sudden bombardment followed causing the battalion ten casualties. That night the Highlanders took over the frontline from the 2nd Royal Welch Fusiliers. The relief was a protracted one partly owing to the deplorable state of the ground, and partly because several of the guides were wounded. In addition to these the battalion had six casualties on the way up.

A and B Companies took over the front line, a series of posts east of Passchendaele, each with its H.Q. in a cellar in the ruins of the village. C and D were in support at Crest Farm and hillside. Except for the usual shelling, including two direct hits on Battalion H.Q., this was a quiet spell. During the four nights a wire entanglement was completed along the whole front; a strenuous and difficult undertaking in the mud and water of no-man's land. The weather was cold and wet.

The 2nd Argylls took over on the evening of 13th January; the Highlanders travelled by the light railway to Ypres, spent the night in cellars and dugouts among the ruins, and got the train next day back to Erie Camp. This spell in the line cost the battalion fifty men sent to hospital in addition to the usual casualties. The loss was partly made good by the arrival of one officer and seven men from England and 24 men from base hospitals.

The 19th saw the battalion east of Ypres again at Alnwick Camp, which was now over ankle-deep in mud. After two days of working, parties for the forward areas and fatigues for cleaning camp, the battalion moved up to relieve the 4th Kings in support at Hamburg. There was a marked increase in the enemy's bombardment; it was thought that this might be the overture to an attack, so as a precautionary measure, two companies were sent to Haalen on the ridge 600 yards southwest of Passchendaele ready to counter-attack should the enemy effect a lodgment in the front line.

The 22nd was a day of great aerial activity, and the troops in the salient had the mortification of seeing two British machines shot down. The enemy's programme however, did not include an attack.

The battalion was relieved by the 4th Suffolks and moved back to Alnwick Camp. Next day a useful draft of eleven officers joined. On the 25th the battalion was attached to the 98th Brigade and moved to Seine, as support battalion in North Broodseinde Sector. While here the chief trouble was a severe dose of gas shelling, which however, did no harm. The 6th Northumberland Fusiliers took over and the Highlanders went by light railway to Brandhoek. After two days in Toronto Camp it moved by rail to Wizernes and marched to Quelmes, six miles west of St. Omer. The 33rd Division was out for a rest.

The first few days of February were wet. On the 4th the Highlanders marched by companies to St. Martin au Leart to see the semi-final of the divisional football competition between the Highlanders and the 20th Royal Fusiliers. A good game resulted in a win for us by 5 goals to nil. The final was played at Wizernes; the result was also satisfactory: Glasgow Highlanders 7 goals, 4th King's Liverpools nil.

On February 9th, No.1 Platoon of A Company won the platoon musketry competition, but on the 13th we were beaten by the 2nd Worcesters in the final of the brigade competition.

Much benefited by their three weeks rest, the Highlanders marched to Wizernes and took the train to Brandhoek. One night was spent in Toronto Camp, and at 8.30 next morning the battalion was once again on the light railway, bound for the Salient. Detraining at Vinery Junction northeast of Ypres, it marched to Saint Jean, where dinners were served. In the afternoon another short railway journey took it to Borry Farm, whence it marched about two miles up Judah Track to the front line at Broodseinde and

relieved the 4th Northumberland Fusiliers.

Broodseinde, which marked the southern boundary of the 8th Corps (Hunter—Weston) is on the ridge 3,500 yards south of Passchendaele. Three companies held about 1,500 yards of frontage from Broodseinde to the Ypres-Roulers railway, with posts pushed forward well down the forward slope. The right and centre companies had their H.Q.'s in pillboxes immediately behind the Broodseinde-Passchendaele road. The left company's was further back behind the railway where it curves eastwards. Battalion H.Q. was in the centre near 'Daring Crossing', with the support company near it.

The relief was completed quickly and quietly. The 23rd was fairly peaceful. That evening a patrol consisting of 2nd Lieuts. J. Johnston and E. J. de T. Robertson and eight men explored no-man's-land for a distance of about 400 yards. They met a German patrol which made off before it could be rounded up. Shortly after midnight an S.O.S. signal was put up on the right, followed by another on the left. Our guns put down a barrage which lasted for three-quarters of an hour. The cause of the excitement was a raid on 7th West Yorks south of Broodseinde.

It had been decided to push out a new series of advanced posts. The first of these had been constructed the previous night by the West Yorks. Its successful defence was due to the fact that it had been finished and completely wired in one night. The Yorkshiremen took one officer and 14 men prisoner.

In the evening another small patrol, 2nd Lieuts. P.A. Moodie, W. B. Metcalfe and an N.C.O., reconnoitred as far as Birma Copse, 800 yards beyond our most advanced post, but could see or hear nothing of the enemy. The same night three deserters gave themselves up to the West Yorks. Along with other interesting information, they stated that the German party which had retreated before Johnston's patrol the previous night had consisted of fifty men on their way to raid our lines. They also said that the orders for the raid still stood.

Another patrol went out on the 25th with the double purpose of intercepting a possible German raiding party and gathering further information about the enemy's dispositions. At 6.15 p.m. Moodie and Metcalf with 30 men went out to Birma Copse, where Moodie and the bulk of the patrol concealed themselves, while Metcalf with a few men went south to Table Wood to try to locate a suspected machine gun emplacement. A careful search revealed nothing and the whole patrol eventually returned without having seen any Germans.

The 16th K.R.R. took over; the relief started at 6.15 p.m. and was completed by 8 p.m. The Highlanders marched to Borry Farm, caught the train to Ypres and quickly settled down in the cellars. The spell in the North Broodseinde Sector had been interesting and satisfactory, casualties had been fewer than usual and General Baird was very gratified at the ascendancy the battalion had gained in no-man's-land.

The battalion moved forward again on March 2nd to Seine as support to the North Broodseinde Sector. While here, carrying parties were supplied by day, and at night wiring parties worked in the front line. On the 6th the Highlanders took over the front line from the Worcestershires. The Brigade was holding, its front with one battalion in the line, one in support at Seine, and one in reserve at Ypres. To cover the work of constructing and wiring the new forward posts, a standing patrol went out each evening at dusk to Hill 38 — rather more than half-way to Birma Copse — and was withdrawn before dawn.

The 7th on the whole was a quiet day, although there was a good deal of heavy shelling along the Broodseinde-Passchendaele road. During the night much wiring was done despite much activity on the part of the enemy's guns. This defensive measure, which was being more strenuously carried out than ever before, was evidence of the realization by the higher command that the initiative had passed to the enemy.

The following night the sector came under several intense bombardments for short periods; battalion H.Q. getting its full share. This was kept up intermittently during the rest of the tour and cost the battalion seven killed and seventeen wounded. At 7.30 p.m. on the 10th the 16th K.R.R. came up and took over in record time. The Highlanders again got on the train at Bonny and travelled down to Ypres through some shelling.

While the battalion was in the line a draft of 94 men had arrived, but had not been sent up. On the 12th 68 more joined. As a big German offensive, which might come on the Flanders front, was expected

any day now these reinforcements were very welcome indeed and they enabled Colonel Menzies to take a respectable battalion up into support again. The leading, company left Ypres at 7 p.m. and by 10 p.m. all the support positions at Seine and Thames Wood had been taken over.

A big enemy attack was expected at any time now and colour was given to this belief by his tremendous bombardments. Our men were kept hard at it strengthening the rear positions by day, and wiring in front by night. Seine dump was a target particularly favoured by the German gunners. Hurricane fire would suddenly be opened on it; this would last five minutes or so, then there would be a pause followed by another bombardment, and so on. This gave the place a bad name.

On the 18th the 16th K.R.R. came up from Ypres and the Highlanders took over the front line from the Worcestershires, who went back to Ypres. No sooner was the relief completed than the enemy put down a heavy mixed bombardment — gas and H.E. which cost us eight casualties, four of them gassed.

There was another alarm at 4.45 a.m. on the 20th, S.O.S. signals went up on the left accompanied by heavy rifle fire. Immediately the guns got to work and our men stood to. The Germans were attempting a raid on the 4th King's Liverpools at Passchendaele; result — four dead and four living Germans captured by the 4th King's, who lost four men killed in the bombardment.

On the night 22nd/23rd March, Major Lamberton, MC, with two patrols under 2nd Lieuts. Metcalf and Johnston, played a game of hide-and-seek with the Germans. The idea was for Johnston's patrol to drive any of the enemy found wandering in no-man's-land into Metcalf's. Two enemy patrols at least were seen. One of them — estimated strength 8 to 12 men — approached to within fifty yards of where Metcalf had taken up his position, but taking alarm made off again. Later Metcalf chased five Germans but lost them in the mist which was becoming very heavy. The night finished with an exchange of rifle fire with a strong enemy patrol in Table Wood about 500 yards in front of the right of the sector. A dead German was found in Birma Copse on the left front and the deceased's documents were duly handed over to Brigade headquarters.

While these patrols were out the battalion was relieved by the 16th K.R.R., and returned to Ypres. The town was being bombarded with high velocity shells. This was kept up at intervals day and night. The four companies were snugly billeted in cellars, but H.Q. details to whom huts had been allotted lost 2. men killed and 7 wounded. The huts were abandoned.

The long expected German offensive had by now started, but not in front of Ypres. Notwithstanding that the British Armies had been fighting constantly throughout 1917 and that the French since Nivelle's failure in April had done practically nothing, Sir Douglas Haig towards the end of the year was ordered to take over an extra 28 miles of front from our allies. By the end of January 1918 this relief was carried out and the British Front was extended to Barisis, south of the River Oise.

On March 21st Gough's Fifth Army was holding 42 miles of front from Barisis to Gouzeaucourt. The greater part of the Fifth Army front had lately been taken over from the French and was inadequately fortified, Byng's Third Army held 27 miles from Gouzeaucourt to Gavrelle. The enemy attacked these two armies in overwhelming force. The attack was favoured by mist, and the Fifth Army was driven back an average distance of two miles on its whole front before night. The flanks of the Third Army held their ground, but on a nine-mile front from Croisilles southwards two miles were lost. The enemy's progress in the days following was even more rapid.

It was not long before the fighting in the south reacted on the situation at Ypres. Reserves were needed, with the consequence that the troops holding the Salient had to be thinned. On the night of 25th/26th March, the 100th Brigade frontage was doubled. The Worcestershires, who were due to relieve the K.R.R. in the front line, side-stepped and went in on the right while the Highlanders, who would normally have gone into support, took over from the K.R.R. An adjustment had to be made in the disposition for holding the line as there was now no battalion in close support. Two companies now held the front posts, with two in support at Thames and Seine.

The following night the extension towards the south was continued, the 2nd Argylls relieving the left front and support companies, and the Highlanders taking over from the Worcestershires on the right. Battalion H.Q. now occupied the Cordial Factory, Zonnebeke.

The Cordial Factory was a palatial H.Q. for a front line battalion. Originally the large cellars of a prosperous factory, it might have remained buried under the ruins of its own superstructure but for the enterprise of Captain W.R. Glen, MC, who at this time was in command of the Brigade Pioneer

Company. Under his supervision it was soon cleared and prepared for the accommodation, not only of battalion G.Q., but also of the special signalling staff — listening set — and some others. Wire beds were provided.

The Highlanders knew every inch of the ground in and on the immediate front of the North Broodseinde sector. The risk of anyone getting lost, between the forward posts was reduced to a minimum by a system of wires which linked the forward posts. An officer or N.C.O. visiting the posts had only to take the wire in his hand and follow it to the next one. No-man's-land had been well explored and the enemy's position and habits were fairly well known. The enemy's main line of posts — and observation by day — was roughly 1,500 yards away on a south easterly spur of the ridge. In the low ground in front he was suspected to have posts which lay 'doggo' by day and observed by night.

In front of Zonnebeke there was some doubt as to his position and no identification had been secured for some time. Naturally therefore, "The Corps Commander is most anxious for an identification" was one of the first messages received at the Cordial Factory.

Accordingly, on the evening of the 29th immediately after dark, 2nd Lieut. D. Livingstone, MM, took out a patrol of 25 men with the object of reconnoitring as far as Mispelaere Cabaret, about 1,000 yards along the road which crossed the ridge from west to east at Broodseinde.

Going as silently as they could, they had covered about half the distance to the Cabaret when a machine gun opened on them from behind China Wood on their right. Immediately every man in the patrol was flat on the ground and the bullets passed harmlessly over them. After waiting a little they started to move forward again, more carefully than ever. Another 200 yards had been covered when rifle fire was opened on them from their left front, and at the same time a flare was put up.

Livingstone was now convinced that they had been seen, and that if he went further forward he might walk into an ambush. He decided to play a waiting game and placed his men so as to ambush the Germans should they come forward to investigate. Before very long — about 9 o'clock — faint footsteps were heard, probably someone walking on the road a considerable distance away, for no movement could be seen. The sounds died away and still the patrol waited.

At half-past twelve his patience was rewarded — or seemed to be — for a party of eight could be seen coming along the road, four on each side of it. On they came till they were only about 25 yards away. The strain on the nerves of the waiting men was great. There was a sudden rifle shot; the Germans turned, bolted, and were lost in the darkness. A few moments later rifle fire was opened along the road, Owing to bad luck — the nervousness of one man — Livingstone had failed when success was in his grasp. There was nothing for it but to withdraw his men and hope for better luck next time.

A similar patrol was ordered for the following night. Colonel Menzies intended to send another patrol under a different officer, but Livingstone, having had a talk with his man, asked to be again given the duty. He took with him 2nd Lieut. Nairne and 25 men, many of whom — including the man who had let off his rifle — were volunteers from the previous night's patrol. The object was the same as on the 29th, the only change being that the patrol was to set out before dark; the rest was left to himself.

The patrol started at 7 o'clock, and proceeding with the greatest boldness soon reached the remains of the Cabaret at the cross-roads. Here no enemy could be seen, so Livingstone decided to go on. Fifty yards further along the road a post was found. It was occupied by four men; they were in a little shelter and had apparently been sleeping. Before they were fully awake they found themselves prisoners. Livingstone having accomplished his task closed the patrol and returned as quickly as he had gone out, taking his four prisoners with him. These were an under officer decorated with an Iron Cross, and three privates, all of the 3rd Battalion, 174th Regiment, 31st Division. They were of good physique and did not appear to be under-nourished.

The success of this patrol reflected great credit on all who took part in it, and particularly on its leader. It was due to the care with which he instructed his men and the boldness and rapidity with which the raid was carried out. No little courage was required to go out while there was yet daylight, yet the time chosen probably gave the greatest chance of success. Colonel Menzies hoped to catch the enemy between the dark and the daylight, when visibility from a distance was bad, but before the forward posts were on the qui vive.

In addition to definitely solving the problem of how the enemy was holding his line — forward posts by night and observation from the higher ground behind by day — the identifications were of great

value to higher authority. Lieut. Gen. Hunter-Weston was particularly pleased, and as a mark of his appreciation he ordered that the raiders should parade at battalion H.Q. at 8 a.m. next morning; a most unusual thing for a corps commander to do. He personally congratulated them and told them of the awards he hoped to get for them.

Sir Aylmer, who was what might be called a front line corps commander, was no infrequent visitor. Like all generals, he had his hobbies. One of them was gas. On this occasion when he arrived he stuck his head in at the door of H.Q. and hissed "gas" Immediately the heavy gas blanket crashed down on his head, knocking his hat off. Sir Aylmer was delighted, so was R.S.M. Rowan, who had detailed a man specially for this demonstration.

Livingstone's second raid had been so successful that Colonel Menzies was urged to repeat the process next night. He argued however, that a better plan would be to set an ambush for the enemy, who might be expected to attempt reprisals. Accordingly, plans were prepared, and as soon as it was dark 2nd Lieut. Stewart took out a party and placed it in half-moon formation across the road. The left flank of the ambush should have rested on Table Wood about 100 yards north of the road, but unfortunately owing to the difficulty of placing the men in the dark, this was not done and the flank was left some distance short of the wood.

According to expectations the enemy did send a raiding party. It advanced through the wood and suddenly fell upon the left wing, where Stewart had posted himself. Confusion resulted, and it was some time before those on the right could make out what was happening. They kept together however, and opening fire on the enemy who greatly outnumbered them, held on till their ammunition was finished and then withdrew.

When a report of what had happened got back to H.Q., 2nd Lieut. Ancrum was ordered to take out his company to clear up the situation, This he did, sweeping forward in four waves. The enemy, however, had retired leaving no dead or wounded. Ancrum searched the wood and 1,000 yards of country to the cross-roads, but could find no trace of the enemy, or of seven Highlanders who were missing. The honour of this encounter was certainly with the Germans. Although patrolling of no-man's-land was continued, there was no further brush with the enemy.

On April 1st a draft of one officer and 62 other ranks joined the battalion. On the 3rd, officers and N.C.O's from the 4th Leicestershires and 5th Lincolnshires reconnoitred our positions and on the night 4th/5th these two battalions, which had come from the Somme fighting and were very much reduced in strength, took over. The Highlanders moved back to Red Rose Camp, Vlamartinghe.

Here Lieut. General Hunter-Weston inspected the battalion and thanked it for its services in holding the ridge through four bitter winter months with only two short rests. He then presented 2nd Lieut. D.T. Livingstone, MM, with the MC ribbon, R.S.M. Rowan with the DCM, and fourteen men with the Military Medal.

The Highlanders long spell on the Passchendaele Ridge had come to an end. It had been one of much hardship, but the men, exposed to frost, snow, rain and wind, bombarded by the enemy's guns from three sides, had stood the test splendidly. But uncomfortable and dangerous as the positions on the ridge were, conditions would have been even worse if the September line had been held.

Sir Douglas Haig's persistence in continuing the battle till the ridge was won was therefore justified from the infantryman's point of view. The low ground behind, besides being even wetter than the ridge, was overlooked by it. Enemy artillery fire would have been more deadly, and the light railway system which saved many a weary mile's tramp enabled reliefs to be quickly carried out and reduced the labour of bringing up ammunition, rations and stores to a minimum.

With all hope of throwing back the enemy's right flank and clearing the coast gone, probably the only alternative to taking the ridge would have been to withdraw to the line held before the Third Battle of Ypres started. Such a confession of failure might have had most serious consequences in 1917.

Chapter 18

NEUVE EGLISE

On the evening of 6th April the Glasgow Highlanders marched out of Red Rose Camp, Vlamertinghe, and entrained for the south. The 33rd Division was going to the relief of the troops who had been so hard pressed during the previous fortnight. The whole night was spent in the train which did not arrive at its destination, Tincques, till 2 p.m. on the 7th. From here a short march took the battalion on to billets in Izel—les—Hameau, a village ten the miles west of Arras.

The situation on the Fifth and Third army fronts now appeared to have been stabilized, On the 28th of March a fresh attack on the First Army on Vimy Ridge had been heavily repulsed, and by April 5th the attack on the Fifth Army was finally held up only ten miles from Amiens. The enemy had not succeeded in separating the British from the French, nor in rolling up the former towards the sea. He had caused us enormous losses however, and had very nearly scored a decisive success.

For the Glasgow Highlanders, the next two days were spent in momentary expectation of further movement orders. After its long spell in the line the battalion was in much need of training. In the short time available work was concentrated on musketry and the tactics of defence.

When the move orders came in it appeared that the Division was about to continue its journey south. The Highlanders paraded at 9 a.m. on April 10th and joined the 100th Brigade column on its way south-wards, but scarcely had two miles been covered when counter-orders arrived. The order "About. Turn" was given and the battalion marched back to Ezel.

The storm had broken out again, not in the south but on the northern portion of the First Army's front immediately north of the la Basse Canal. Lieut. Gen. Haking, our first Brigadier in France, commanded one of the Corps attacked. General Horne, our divisional commander in 1915, commanded the army and the battlefield, including such places as Givenchy, Festubert, Rue de Bois, and Neuve Chapelle, recalled memories of early days.

That evening at 6.30 p.m. a 100th Brigade order was received warning units to be ready to move on half-an-hour's notice. At 7.50 p.m. march orders arrived and at 8.20 p.m. the Highlanders moved off to entrain at Aubigny, four miles away. The greater part of the night was spent waiting for the train, which did not get away till 2.30 next morning. Water carts and cooks were loaded on the train; the remainder of the transport was moving by road.

Shortly after nine o'clock in the morning the train stopped at Caestre on the Hazebrouck-Poperinghe railway, and the battalion detrained. After an interval, during which the men consumed a portion of the rations they carried by way of breakfast, the battalion was on the move again by bus for Meteren on the Bailleul road.

The scene on that road had not been witnessed behind the British front since 1914. The unfortunate inhabitants of Neuve Eglise, Bailleul, and Meteren were fleeing from their homes. Up the broad cobbled road swept a tide of distressed humanity, largely women and children, all with their portable belongings on their backs, in hand-carts, perambulators, or anything on wheels. Many were in tears and apparently so tired that they could hardly carry on.

Arriving at Meteren, which stands on a hill, the Highlanders marched through the village and a little way along the road to Bailleul. Here the battalion halted to await further orders. Pickets were posted on the roads leading east and south. The battalion was now on the road it had marched along on its way to join the 5th Brigade in November 1914; then the First Battle of Ypres was just over — now the crisis of the Battle of the Lys was approaching.

The enemy had been fortunate in his choice of date for the first blow of his northern offensive. On April 9th when the Portuguese were about to be relieved, and were holding a double frontage With one division on the low ground north of Givenchy, they were attacked in force and quickly driven from their trenches. The 55th Division at Givenchy — the only British division on the front which had not been in the southern fighting — held its ground and formed a defensive flank facing north. On the left the 40th Division at Bois Grenier with the enemy more than 2,800 yards behind its right flank was forced back,

and took up a line from Sailly-sur-la-Lys to Bois Grenier facing south. In the centre the 51st and 50th Divisions, just out of the Somme battle and largely composed of drafts, were hurried up and although hampered by the fugitive Portuguese, managed to hold the line of the Rivers Lawe and Lys. That night the break was ten miles broad by about five miles deep.

On the 10th the enemy made only slight progress on the line of the Lawe, but crossed the Lys and pushed our troops back to beyond Steenwerok. He made fresh attacks from north of Armentieres to the Ypres-Comines Canal, taking Ploegsteert from the 25th Division and Messines from the 19th. In the afternoon Messines was retaken by the South African Brigade of the 9th Division. The 9th also during the night cleared the Germans out of Wytschaete Village, into which they had penetrated in the afternoon. As Armentieres was outflanked north and south, the 54th Division there was withdrawn during the afternoon. The result of the second day's fighting was that the break was twenty miles broad. Its extreme depth at Steenwerok was seven miles, while north of Armentieres it varied from three miles to a mile-and-a-half.

Such was the situation the night before the arrival of the 33rd Division. During the 11th it was quite evident that heavy fighting was going on along the whole front, but of reliable information there was none. It was reported that Merville had been lost at the outset, twenty-seven German divisions were opposed by seven British — for the Portuguese were not long in the battle — and six of these seven had been in the Somme fighting. As our line was pushed back it perforce got thinner, and gaps appeared. Reinforcements were being hurried up to fill the gaps, with the result that divisions, brigades and battalions were getting mixed up.

The Highlanders remained, waiting orders, on the Meteren-Bailleul road during the afternoon. All that was definitely known of the situation was that there was a battle going on to the east and south. It sounded several miles away. The 2nd Worcestershires and 16th K.R.R. had gone off into the blue. They had arrived first at Caestre and gone eastwards in motor lorries. In the meantime one could rest, and the opportunity was not to be missed, even for an hour. There would be little enough later on.

An order was received at 5.15 p.m. which cleared things up. The 100th brigade was attached to the 25th Division — which had been attacked and driven back to Ploegsteert the previous day — and had been ordered to take up a position in the 'Army Line' in support. The 'Army Line' was a line of reserve trenches running almost due north through Nieppe to Kemmel village.

General Baird had ordered the 16th K.R.R. and 2nd Worcestershires to occupy this line from Romarin to a point 800 yards east of Neuve Eglise. The Glasgow Highlanders were to be in reserve at Vauxhall Camp on the Bailleul-Neuve Eglise road. The 25th Division was in the 9th Corps, Second Army.

The battalion moved off at once and was soon marching through deserted Bailleul, which being under shell-fire was not a place to linger in. Here, scouts reported that the enemy had occupied la Creche, half-way between Bailleul and Nieppe; a right flank guard was therefore put out for the remainder of the march.

About a mile east of Bailleul the road begins to mount the Ravelsberg Spur. The 'Minimum Reserve' remained here, joining those of the forward battalions. Vauxhall Camp was situated about two miles west of Neuve Eglise on the southern slope of Crucifix Corner Hill. The Army Line lay about two-and-a-half miles away. Little was known about the situation in front.

After dark the K.R.R.C. and the Worcestershires took up their positions. The former had some difficulty, because Romarin which was supposed to be held by the 75th brigade of the 25th Division, was really occupied by the enemy. The Rifles accordingly were unable to take up the whole of their sector of the 'Army Line'. On their right were troops of the 75th Brigade facing southeast and linking up with the Newfoundlanders of the 88th brigade at Papot. The Worcestershires were in touch on their left with the 4th K.O.Y.L.I. of the 49th Division which, like the 33rd, had lately arrived.

As the situation on the right of the 100th Brigade front was not regarded as satisfactory Captain R.C. Reid was ordered at 10 p.m. to take B Company forward and occupy a position west of the Neuve Eglise-Steenwerck road in support of the K.R.R.C.

Similarly at 1.30 a.m. C Company moved out to occupy the high ground behind Neuve Eglise in support of the Worcestershires. These companies got themselves fairly well dug in before dawn, C being in touch with B near Aux Trois Rois Cabaret, and with the K.O.Y.L.I. on the western outskirts of Neuve Eglise. While these movements were being carried out the enemy's artillery was very active and caused

some loss.

The third day of the battle was now over. The enemy had made no progress in front of Bethune, but further north he had reached Merville. In our own immediate neighbourhood he was known to be in or about in Creche two miles due south of the Highlanders H.Q. and behind the right flank of the 100th Brigade in the 'Army Line' facing east. In front of the K.R.R.C. and Worcestershires he was advancing from Ploegsteert, but his exact position was unknown. On the Messines Ridge he had only made a slight advance.

The crisis was now at hand. On the southern front of the battle the enemy was only three miles from Bethune. If it fell. Givenchy must and Cuinchy might go. The British line right down to the Vimy Ridge would then be endangered. In the centre he was within ten miles of Hazebrouck, a vital railway centre. Indeed the whole lateral railway system was threatened. In the north Mount Kemmel and the two groups of hills west of it were tantalizing objectives. The Ypres salient would look rather silly if these or even if Mount Kemmel alone fell into his hands.

Unlike the earlier situation in the south, there was no room here to gain time by giving ground. The British Army was fighting with its back to the sea. Sir Douglas Haig realized the seriousness of the situation. There was probably evidence already of signs of breaking in some of the units which had been decimated in the March fighting and now with undigested drafts were undergoing a similar trial. Be that as it may, it was on the 11th that Sir Douglas wrote this order, which was issued next day:

TO ALL RANKS OF THE BRITISH ARMY IN FRANCE

'Three weeks ago today the enemy began his terrific attacks against us on a 50 mile front. His objects are to separate us from the French, to take the Channel ports and destroy the British. In spite of throwing already 106 Divisions, into the battle and enduring the most reckless sacrifice of human life, he has as yet made little towards his goals.'

'We owe this to the determined fighting and self-sacrifice of our troops. Words fail me to express the admiration which I feel for the splendid resistance offered by all ranks of our Army under the most trying circumstances. Many amongst us are now tired. To those I would say that Victory will belong to the side which holds out the longest. The French Army is moving rapidly and in great force to our support.'

'There is no other course open to us but to fight it out! Every position must be held to the last, man: there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause each one of us must fight to the end. The safety of our Homes and the Freedom of mankind depend upon the conduct of each one of us at this critical moment.'

D. Haig.

F.M.

Thursday,
11th April, 1916.

Dawn on the 12th brought with it a bombardment. Vauxhall Camp, while sheltered from the east, was open to the southeast and south. At 8 a.m. the camp was heavily shelled causing several casualties, among them Captain D. McKinnon, the Medical Officer, who was mortally wounded. At any time this loss would have been a heavy one. Captain McKinnon had been posted to the battalion in November 1917. He had quickly proved his efficiency as a medical officer, and among all ranks he was deservedly popular. His loss now at the beginning of what was going to be a desperate fight was doubly severe.

Colonel Menzies abandoned the camp, ordered A and D Companies to take up positions facing south, south of Waterloo Road which runs parallel to the main Bailleul-Neuve Eglise road some 700 yards down the slope, and moved H.Q. into a farm situated in a slight depression north of Waterloo Road.

By now the enemy was advancing in force against the K.R.R.C. and Worcestershires from the direction of Ploegsteert. There was no immediate danger here, however, for the troops of the 100th Brigade in a good trench line would not be easily broken. Indeed the Worcestershires had sent out two strong fighting patrols which, making skilful use of the numerous hedges, kept the Germans back during the forenoon.

The situation on the southern front was not nearly so satisfactory. South of Romarin the enemy had swept through the 'Army Line', outflanked the 100th Brigade's position and was now attacking in a northerly direction. Here the defenders, worn out troops of the 54th Division, had no proper trenches.

From the Highlanders' H.Q. great numbers of German infantry and guns could be seen on the plain. The German gunners were bombarding Vauxhall Camp over open sights.

Well might General Baird feel anxiety about the security of his southern flank. Whether he had already received an appeal for reinforcements, or whether he acted on his own initiative in taking measures to secure his right, he ordered a company of the Highlanders to go to the support of the Monmouths near la Creche south of the Bailleul-Armentieres road.

A Company was detailed for this duty, and under the command of Lieut. Peter A. Moodie it moved off after noon. Marching almost due south, Moodie soon reached the road. It was about a mile from Battalion H.Q. Leaving the company here in such cover as was available, he went forward with C.S.M. Caldwell to reconnoitre and get into touch with the troops he had been ordered to support.

He soon found the Commanding Officer, who appeared surprised at his arrival. However, seeing that he had come, he might as well take up a position, round about where he was would do well enough. Moodie accordingly went back to his platoons, discussing his dispositions with Caldwell. He instructed the latter to get the rear platoons into position while he looked after those in front, which were under the command of 2nd. Lieuts. W. Ross and A. G. M. Watt.

No sooner had he got started to work than he was surprised to see some of the troops he was to support coming back through his position. The Germans were hard on their heels. Moodie immediately gave the order to rush forward and occupy the trenches which had just been evacuated. Led by the three officers the Highlanders dashed forward, but it was too late; the enemy opened fire, all three officers fell and most of the men. Ross was killed, Moodie and Watt wounded, the latter mortally. No. 1 and 2 Platoons simply ceased to exist.

C.S.M. Caldwell was now in command of the Company, or rather what was left of it. They opened fire on the enemy and drove them back. He personally went out under accurate sniping to get up ammunition; the wounded of the ill-fated platoons were helped in and sent back.

Unfortunately, Lieut. Moodie's map had not been taken from him and Caldwell had none. He was unable, therefore, to give a map reference of his position in his messages to Battalion H.Q., but he supplied a sketch in its place.

He was much troubled with enemy snipers in a building on his front, and gave it as a suitable target for the guns. It is more than doubtful if his message ever reached any battery, but shortly afterwards "two black ones" landed plump on the offending house, to the great delight of everyone concerned. His small force hung on; a thin line with an open flank.

The situation between A Company and the 16th K.R.R.C. was obscure. General Baird had received a message that the worn-out troops of the 54th Division could not hold out much longer. He decided to use the 'Minimum Reserve' of the 2nd Worcestershires — an indication of the very serious view he took of the state of affairs — and sent it to take up a position east of de Seule.

2nd-Lieut. W.B. Metcalfe took over command of A Company. As the enemy had retreated, he followed them up for several hundred yards. From this new position he went back and found some Tyneside Scottish whom he brought up to prolong his right flank. Then, having found touch with Newfoundlanders on his left, he swung his line to conform with theirs, and dug in.

As soon as possible he took stock of his position, which was along the front of an abandoned camp with his right resting on a road. It was on slightly elevated ground, the commencement of the slope up to the Ravelsberg-Neuve Eglise ridge. He placed a Lewis gun post on his right flank on this road; there was a magnificent field of fire to the right and to the right rear. This was fortunate, for this flank seemed to be quite in the air. Two miles to the south lay Steenwerck which had been occupied by the enemy for two days.

As darkness fell, this flank gave reason for uneasiness; the Lewis guns could not prevent the enemy from working round in the dark, and there were not enough men for extensive patrolling. A listening post, however, was placed in front.

An arrangement had been made that neither the Newfoundlanders nor the Glasgow Highlanders would withdraw without informing the other. When at 10.15 p.m. word came that the Newfoundlanders were going, Metcalfe went back and got in touch with the Northumberland Fusiliers. They then brought up their right flank to guard

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To return to the battalion, no change was made in the dispositions of the companies till 5 o'clock in the afternoon, when D Company was moved forward to a commanding position at Crucifix Corner facing east.. The enemy had now approached the Army Line in force and. there was heavy rifle fire all along the 100th Brigade's front facing east. A large number of German batteries had been brought up, and could be seen from the trenches getting into action and opening fire on Neuve Eglise over open sights.

At about five o'clock C Company was heavily bombarded. Half-an-hour later stragglers of various units — South Wales Borderers., Cheshires and South Staffords — were observed retiring on C Company's front. They were stopped and put into a position along a hedge behind Neuve Eglise under orders of Captain Harris.

While this was going on a report reached Battalion H.Q. that the enemy had penetrated Neuve Eglise, and had reached the ridge held by C Company. Colonel Menzies ordered D Company and H.Q. Company to move forward and counter-attack. A reconnaissance of the position however, showed that this report was false — probably due to stragglers emerging from the village having been mistaken for Germans — and the two companies withdrew to their original positions.

At half-past eight there was another alarm. A few stragglers were still coming into C Company's position and some of these reported to Captain Harris that the Germans were actually in Neuve Eglise. He sent out a fighting patrol under Lieut. Garvie to clear up the situation. The patrol went right through the village, made a thorough search and found all clear. After getting into touch with the Worcestershires whose H.Q. was in the brewery at the southeastern end of the village, the patrol withdrew.

Battalion H.Q. was now moved forward to Aux Trois Rois Cabaret to be in close touch with events.

While there was still doubt about the situation in the village, Captain Harris found out that a considerable gap had appeared on his left. He reported this to H.Q. and two platoons of D Company were sent up to occupy it and keep touch with the K.O.Y.L.I. This move was completed about midnight.

Casualties up to this time were reported to be 5 officers and 45 other ranks. In addition to the M.O. and the three subalterns of A Company, Lieut.W.F. Alexander of C Company had been wounded.

During the 12th the enemy had made considerable progress in other parts of the battlefield. On the right Givenchy still held, but northwest of Bethune he had advanced two-and-a-half miles, to within two miles of St. Venant. Fresh — or comparatively fresh — British divisions were arriving. In front of the Foret de Nieppe the 4th Guards Brigade — the three surplus battalions of the Guards Division when it was reduced — had made a particularly valiant stand covering the detraining of the 1st Australian Division. On the right rear of the 100th Brigade the enemy had almost reached Meteren and Bailleul, where the 19th and 98th Brigades were stiffening the defence. North of Neuve Eglise the enemy had reached Wulverghem, the whole of the Messines Ridge south of Wytschaete being now in his hands.

It was about 1.30 a.m. when Sergeant Wood with A Company's listening post heard singing and the sound of men marching up the road; evidently a good many of them. He got word back, and two Lewis guns were opened along the road. Cries and the sounds of a stampede were heard. Sergeant Robertson and three men were sent out to investigate. They found that the intruders had been a ration party who had bolted, leaving their loads behind them. Two Germans, one of them wounded, were found hiding in a house. They were taken prisoner, but the most acceptable part of the capture was the enemy's rations — chiefly brown bread and sausages, with a liberal allowance of cigars and cigarettes for everyone.

After Neuve Eglise had been revisited by the and ^(sic) reported to be clear, the two platoons of D Company being no longer required, were withdrawn again, at 4 a.m.

Down in front of la Creche, no attempt seems to have been made by the enemy during the night to turn A Company's flank — an extraordinary lack of enterprise on his part. At dawn, however, the Germans attacked both the southern front and the 'Army Line'.

A Company was attacked at 5.30 a.m. in some strength. The Highlanders and Northumberland Fusiliers had no difficulty holding their ground, beating off the Germans and in inflicting heavy casualties on them.

At the angle in front of de Seule, however, the British line was first pushed back, and then broken. Major Donaldson's detachment of Worcestershires, after putting up an heroic resistance, retired to the railway embankment behind de Seule, where later on it was practically 'wiped out'. In the 'Army Line'

the Worcestershires held firm, but the situation regarding the 16th K.R.R.C. was not clear.

The German attacks were supported by a very heavy bombardment which reached B and C Companies about six o'clock. Stragglers were now coming in from the southeast in considerable numbers. These men, many of whom had been fighting for several days, belonged to the South Wales Borderers and other units. Three officers and sixty men were halted, and made to get into position in a sunken road on the right of B Company.

The enemy, as in his break-through in the south, was employing the tactics of 'Infiltration'. His method was to push forward in small groups, find out where resistance was weak, or where there were any gaps in the defence which could be exploited. Machine gun sections then worked their way forward, outflanked and enfiladed those parts of the British line which were holding up the frontal attack.

While the Worcestershires were busily engaged in repelling the attack on their front, the Germans who had broken through on their right were making their way up Leinster Road towards Neuve Eglise. At the same time numbers of 2nd South Lancashires were seen retiring across our front. The Germans had almost reached Colonel Stoney's H.Q. at the brewery before they were discovered. The Worcestershire reserve company counter-attacked and made the position secure for the time being, killing a large number of Germans on the road and taking the remainder prisoner.

While this was going on considerable numbers of the enemy appeared in front of B and C Companies. As a precautionary measure two platoons of D Company were again sent forward to prolong C Company's left. The enemy soon made a determined attack, but was beaten off leaving a few prisoners behind. His losses were very heavy, but B and C Companies' were also severe, and included Captain Harris, who had been commanding C Company with great ability and courage.

True to his tactics of infiltration the enemy had discovered a gap between the Highlanders and the Worcestershire Reserve Company, and had penetrated through it into the western end of Neuve Eglise. Lieut. Nairne was ordered to counter-attack with a platoon of D Company. The Highlanders dashed into the village and quickly cleared it. The only prisoner taken was an officer found hiding in a shop under the counter.

About forty South Lancashires got as far as Battalion H.Q. where they were halted and made to take up a position facing southwest. They were stiffened by Lieut. Bennett, Sergt. Diamond and about a dozen men with the anti-aircraft Lewis guns belonging to Headquarters. On A Company's left the enemy had found another gap and small parties working their way along hedges reached the sunken road near Aux Trois Rois Cabaret and planted machine guns within close range of Battalion H.Q. Bennett and Diamond each took a Lewis gun and, getting into position on the banks on each side of the road, engaged the Germans and drove them back.

Shortly afterwards, at 9 o'clock, H.Q. had the misfortune to be shelled by our own guns, one of which secured a direct hit on the cabaret, wrecking the room in which a moment earlier the entire H.Q. staff had been sitting round the table holding a conference. This was rather disconcerting to Colonel Menzies, who had chosen a back room for the purpose as being rather safer than the front. The P.B.I. can take a joke as well as any, but this one would have been more appreciated if our guns had been giving more effective support during the enemy's attack. 33rd Division had come north without its artillery and as a consequence of this the 100th Brigade had no close co-operation with the guns during this battle.

From nine o'clock till eleven there was a respite. The Germans, exhausted by their efforts, were probably awaiting reinforcements before renewing the attack. At eleven a heavy bombardment came down on C Company. This lasted two hours, but no infantry attack developed.

Shortly afterwards, however, the enemy in front of B Company commenced to work forward again, and established two machine guns in the Custom House on the Neuve Eglise-Steenwerck road. The house was about 100 yards in front of a post held by 2nd Lieut. A. Phillips with some Highlanders and 2nd Lieut. H.K. Murray of the 6th South Wales Borderers. Phillips with a few of his men rushed the house covered by the fire of the remainder, put all the Germans out of action, and returned with one of the guns and two prisoners.

During the forenoon a few stragglers, principally Cheshires and South Wales Borderers, were still finding their way back. These men were seized and made to get into the support line. They were leaderless and exhausted and not likely to be of much use.

At half-past one the situation was comparatively quiet. Parties of the enemy could be seen retiring.

from in front of B and C Companies. Appearances, however, were deceptive. A considerable part of the Army Line had been lost. The 16th K.R.R.C. had been cut to pieces. The right Company of the 2nd Worcestershires had swung back and now faced south, with a small party of Rifles prolonging its right, but between this line and the Highlanders' left there was a gap of about 1,000 yards. At 3p.m. the two platoons of D Company which had been attached to C were ordered to take up positions covering this gap.

Aux Trois Rois Cabaret was now under too close observation by the enemy to be of further use as battalion H.Q. and it was also open to the attack of small parties of the enemy who were getting through the fragmentary British line to the southwest. Colonel Menzies decided at 4 p.m. to move back to a house on the Ravensberg road about 500 yards behind, and down the western slope of the hill.

An American M.O. had been sent to take Captain McKinnon's place. He had established his aid post in a cellar of the cabaret.

Towards evening an increase in the enemy's bombardment gave evidence that he was about to renew his efforts to break through. All day the 100th Brigade and scattered fragments of the 34th and 25th Divisions had been holding a salient. Now its forward, or southeastern, face was about to be smashed.

At half-past six an attack in great force was made on B Company. Second Lieutenant J.A. Ancrum who was now in command, held on for an hour. The miscellaneous troops on his right, however, were forced back and this enabled the enemy to bring up machine guns which enfiladed B Company's trenches, causing many casualties. As it was now evident that the enemy was working his way round behind B Company, Ancrum was forced to give ground and retired slowly in the direction of battalion H.Q.

Meanwhile C Company under 2nd Lieut. E.L. Garvie was also heavily engaged. Three separate attacks were repulsed in rapid succession, but by half-past eight the Company was practically surrounded. The two D Company platoons on the left were completely cut off.

The withdrawal of B Company exposed Aux Trois Rois Cabaret to the full force of the attack. 2nd Lieut. Bennett was still here with the 'A.A.' Lewis guns and a small force consisting of a few H.Q. men and a number of men of other units collected by Sergeant Diamond. Acting as they had done earlier in the day, Bennett and Diamond kept the Germans at bay for a time, but the Cabaret could not be held much longer. The small garrison was dwindling under the fire of ever-increasing numbers of Germans. When Bennett, who was now wounded, saw that he would certainly be surrounded if he waited, he very wisely decided to go while the going was good. The survivors of the small garrison made off as fast as they could for the new Battalion. H.Q.

By this time a new position was being established on the reverse slope of the hill. C Company was surrounded and very nearly shot to pieces, but a few survivors managed to get back. Only one N.C.O. got back from the D Company detachment to report how the two platoons had fought to the end.

The new position was not an ideal one, but such as it was it was rapidly organised for defence. There were some hedges — and even, getting behind a hedge gives one a feeling of security — and on the left a ditch. A thinly-held line was established in semi-circular formation about 300 yards from the Cabaret down the northwestern slope. The men to occupy it amounted to about 150, including Battalion H.Q., details of B and C Companies and some South Lancs. and Cheshires. Both flanks were completely in the air.

The Germans were not long in attacking, but were beaten back with fire, and contented themselves with occupying a position along a sunken road running northwest from the Cabaret.

The most serious feature of the situation was that the Highlanders were now completely out off from the 2nd Worcesters in Neuve Eglise, and the 16th K.R.R.C. — wherever they were. To rectify this two things were urgently needed; reinforcements and ammunition. Colonel Menzies was in communication with Brigade H.W. by telephone, and arrangements were made to supply both deficiencies. The ammunition was the more immediate requirement, and Captain Collins who was attached to the Brigade staff got a supply loaded on a light motor wagon and sent it off post-haste. The driver, perhaps rather scared, came tearing up the road, passed Battalion H.Q., and was almost through the front line and among the Boche before he could be stopped.

Reinforcements, arrived about midnight: a detachment from Minimum Reserve under Captain McKersie and some details of Wiltshires and Cheshires. Capt. McKersie took up a position on the right, the Englishmen on the left. The position McKersie was ordered to hold was already occupied by few men

belonging to various English and Welsh units. A stout-hearted Sergeant Major appeared to be in charge. He told McKersie frankly that the men he had were so exhausted that they were almost useless, but that if a 'Jock' were put between them they would hold on all right.

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After having repulsed the attacks in the morning, A Company had held its position alongside the Northumberland Fusiliers. The immediate flank was still open. Heavy fighting was going on in Meteren and Bailleul. Many of the farms on the plain were burning, and the smoke from these made it impossible to tell what was happening. The enemy's shells had also set fire to the huts of the camp behind the Company's position.

2nd. Lieut. Metcalfe had posted himself on the right, while C.S.M. Caldwell looked after the left. During the day the Germans tried to rush the position several times, but they were always driven back by fire. The enemy also tried to get round the right flank, but the Lewis gun on the road soon stopped that. The greatest trouble was enemy shellfire, although the men were in a trench which they had found partially completed, and this gave them some protection.

A German aeroplane came over flying very low. It evidently spotted them, for soon afterwards the guns seemed to be firing directly at them, instead of at the area they were in. The heavy enemy barrage opened at 4 p.m. An hour later hostile fire from the left led to the discovery that the Northumberland Fusiliers had retired from their position. C.S.M. Cadwell sent word of this to Lieut. Metcalfe.

After A Company had held on for more than an hour, Metcalfe decided to retire also. The necessary orders were sent along the line of posts, but unfortunately did not reach the Lewis gun section on the left where Caldwell had stationed himself. The two platoons retired without difficulty, all except the post on the left, which remained in blissful ignorance of what was happening.

Before long, however, it became evident that something was wrong, and the Sergeant Major realised that the post was isolated, with the enemy closing in on it. Fortunately the burning huts were giving out heavy smoke, which the southeast wind carried along the line of retreat. Sending his men back one by one, Caldwell remained serving the gun along with Corporal Boyle and Private Allan. After a final burst of fire, these three picked up the gun and made off. Caldwell was hit on the ankle but ran on, and all three reached the remainder of the Company in a breastwork in front of a farm about half-a-mile in rear. Here the survivors remained during the night. A Company was now represented by about twenty men. Metcalfe had also been wounded, but both he and Caldwell remained at duty.

The battalion's casualties up to midnight 15th/14th were estimated as 14 officers and 300 other ranks. During the day 2nd. Lieuts. W.M. Beattie and J. Nairn had been killed. Capt. R.C. Reid, Lieut. C.F. Syme, 2nd Lieuts. J.W. Hendry, D.T. Livingston, MC,MM, T.D. Murphy, W.B. Metcalfe, J. Johnston and J. Bennett had been wounded; the last three remaining at duty.

The Highlanders had now been without rest for three days, and during the last two had been engaged in heavy fighting. But, tired as they were, they had not lost anything of their fighting spirit. Many of them had seen incidents which in their opinion reflected little credit on the troops involved. Due allowance may not have been made for the severe strain under which other units had been operating — perhaps twice as long as they themselves had been. Nevertheless ground had been lost which should have been held. The ease with which the Germans had broken through the Portuguese on the 9th, and the lack of British reserves immediately available to fill the gap, had enabled the enemy to advance so rapidly on an ever-widening front that there had been a partial breakdown in our system of command. Intermingled units out of touch with their own formations were only too inclined to follow any movement to the rear.

Chapter 19

THE BATTLE OF THE LYS

After the enemy had been driven back into the sunken road at Aux Trois Rois Cabaret he made no fresh attempt to advance. The arrival of reinforcements enabled Colonel Menzies to consider plans for a counter-attack in the direction of Neuve Eglise, with the object of regaining touch with the ~Worcestershires. If the line Bailleul—Neuve Eglise was to be held the sooner this was done the better, as any delay would allow the enemy to bring up reinforcements.

However, higher authority had already decided otherwise — at 5 a.m. an order was received to withdraw the battalion via Crucifix Corner and Clapham Road to Hille, about a mile south-west of Dranoutre. The stubborn resistance of the 100th Brigade had given time for the establishment of a new line, Bailleul Station-Crucifix Corner-Wulverghem.

The position was not an easy one to evacuate with the enemy higher up the hill. The road to Crucifix Corner was on the southern slope of the ridge. This flank was the more exposed to attack — it was now in reality the true front — but it was only here that the convex slope gave any hope of cover from the machine guns at Aux Trois Rois Cabaret. The Minimum Reserve under Captain McKersie acted as rear-guard. From its position on the right this comparatively fresh detachment kept up fire on the enemy — a machine gun near Crucifix Corner was also giving covering fire — while B, C, and D Companies with attached troops worked down to the right, traversed the lower slope and made their way up a depression on the hill-side to Crucifix Corner. The enemy made an attack from the south on the right of the rearguard. While this movement was in progress, but was easily beaten off by fire.

The rearguard then made its way back by the same route. The movement, although carried out under the very noses of the Germans, was completed with the loss of only a few men wounded.

Once Crucifix Corner was reached. the rest was easy. Clapham Road ran northwards, to Dranoutre. Following the road for about a mile, the battalion struck westwards and another mile brought it to Hille at 7.30 a.m. The men were dismissed to billets in farms. A meal was issued and then followed a brief rest.

The survivors of A Company had been relieved in the early hours of the morning and had rejoined the battalion, which was now reorganized into three companies of two platoons each; A and C being amalgamated under command of Captain McKersie.

The rest was very brief. At two o'clock in the afternoon the three companies started digging a new defence line facing south on the forward slope in front of Hille. At Neuve Eglise three days earlier positions had had to be reconnoitred and taken up in the dark. Now there was daylight and plenty of time. No wire was available, but a substitute was found in some tall, and stout hedges behind which the trenches were sighted; the advantages of this course — protection against assault and cover from view, both from the air and the ground — being considered to outweigh the theoretical objection that hedges were good ranging marks for artillery.

During the evening Lieut. Col. Stoney rejoined the Brigade with the survivors of the 2nd Worcestershires who had withdrawn from Neuve Eglise after putting up a magnificent resistance. The companies in the Army Line had suffered tremendous losses. A few had surrendered after being surrounded, and the balance had made their way back in small parties. The 16th K.R.R.C. on the exposed flank had fared even worse. The strength of the 100th Brigade had been reduced almost to that of a battalion. It was now under orders of the 49th Division.

On the southern part of the battle front the enemy had made no fresh progress, but in the centre he had taken Vieux-Berquin and Merris. Meteren and Bailleul, however, still held out, but orders had been issued for a withdrawal from Passchendaele and the abandonment of about two-thirds of the Ypres salient.

The Highlanders spent the afternoon digging their new posts. There was some shelling, during which Captain G.H. Warren commanding D Company was wounded, but the work went steadily on. The night was quiet.

On the 15th the work was continued. A and C Companies occupied the right front, B the left front and D the support position. In the afternoon the enemy put a very heavy barrage on the Ravelsberg Spur

in front. Shortly afterwards our troops could be seen retiring down the slope. Stragglers from three different regiments reached the Highlanders' posts where they were stopped and forced to go forward again to rejoin their battalions.

At 4 p.m. the enemy could be seen on the Spur, and machine gun fire was opened on them. The Highlanders were now well dug in, so that the barrage which now reached them only caused a few casualties.

The loss of Ravelsberg, however, was a serious one. The enemy now had a magnificent position for giving covering fire for his next advance, which would be against the Highlanders in front of Hille. An immediate counter-attack might regain the Spur, but General Baird had no reserve to carry it out. Half his troops, the Glasgow Highlanders, were holding what might at any moment become the front line, and neither the Worcestershires nor the Rifles could be expected to carry out an offensive movement, even if they had had the necessary numbers. He accordingly decided to form a composite battalion under Major J.R. Lamberton, MC, consisting of about 150 Highlanders and an equal number of the 16th K.R.R.C.

At 5.30 p.m. the necessary order was issued, and as soon as the new unit was collected and organized in two companies, it moved forward to Keersebrom with the object of retaking Ravelsberg. At Keersebrom Lamberton picked up stragglers from the 4th and 5th Leicesters and 5th Lincolns, about 6 officers and 300 other ranks, thus doubling the strength of his force. He was on the point of resuming his advance against Ravelsberg when he received counter-orders cancelling the attack and instructing him to take up a defensive position along the line of a light railway running from the huts at Keersebrom eastwards on the low ground about halfway between Hille and Ravelsberg.

Even this position could not be taken up without a brush with enemy patrols which, however, were easily driven off. Having got in touch with the troops on both flanks the composite battalion settled down for the night.

At 1 a.m. Major Lamberton had to make some adjustments in his dispositions owing to the withdrawal of some of the units he was co-operating with, and an hour later he himself was ordered to withdraw, after informing the units on his flanks, and take up a position on the left of the 100th Brigade front.

This order, which had been issued by Brigade H.Q. at 12.20 a.m. and took an hour-and-forty minutes to deliver, required the movement to be completed by 3 a.m. Major Lamberton, after making sure that he was leaving no troops on his flanks, withdrew accordingly, relieving troops of the Loyal North Lancs. and Corps Cyclists who moved back and formed a Brigade Reserve under Colonel Stoney. The move was completed by 6 a.m.

The reason for the cancellation of the attack on Ravelsberg and for the subsequent withdrawal of the composite battalion was the fall of Bailleul, which the enemy had entered during the evening, and which could now be seen about two miles away on the right in flames. The line of battle now ran practically straight from Meteren to Wytschaete, along the foothills of the Mont des Cats-Kemmel range — consequently a force on Ravelsberg, or even at Keersebrom, would have been completely isolated. This line was a very ragged one, held by the remains of all sorts and conditions of units considerably mixed up. In many cases the morale of the troops was low.

They were now literally fighting with their backs to the wall — the Flanders heights which had to be held at all costs. To shorten his line and provide a few more reserves the Commander-in-Chief had decided to abandon the Passchendaele Ridge and evacuate the greater part of the Ypres salient. This movement was now in process of being accomplished. April 15th had brought no material change otherwise on the battle front.

The 100th brigade near the foot of the gradually sloping southeastern ridge of Mont Noir was holding what might be regarded as the key position of this part of the line. The Brigade was rather mixed up, but generally the Highlanders were in the centre with posts of the Worcestershires and 10th Lincolns on their right, and of the K.R.R.C., 25th Division R.E. — very stout fellows — and 25th Division Machine Gunners on their left. The 9th Northumberland Fusiliers (103rd Brigade) were behind the right rear of the Brigade, while the support on the left consisted of those Highlanders who had formed part of Major Lamberton's temporary command. Both the Worcestershires and the K.R.R.C. were very weak, particularly in officers.

During the early morning large numbers of Germans could be seen on the slopes of the Ravelsberg

spur working their way forward in small groups. They presented tantalising targets, but the range was too great for effective rifle fire. Artillery co-operation so far as the 100th brigade was concerned had been almost non-existent up to now, but at last the long-promised French reinforcements were coming up, and what was even more to the point some of their 'seventy-fives' had arrived. General Baird immediately got in touch with the 59th Regiment of French Artillery. He sent as liaison officer Captain J.W. Collins, whose enthusiasm and perfect knowledge of their language spurred the Frenchmen on to great efforts. Soon the 'seventy-fives' were firing over the brigade and doing great execution among the enemy.

The unmistakable bark of the French field guns must have given the Germans something to think about, but they still came on, and already could be seen collecting among the huts at Keersebrom and along the railway which had been occupied by the composite battalion during the night. They were now within effective rifle range and suffered accordingly whenever they exposed themselves to the view of our Lewis-gunners and snipers.

At nine o'clock the enemy's artillery became very active, the fire increasing to barrage intensity at intervals. This continued all forenoon. The Germans, under cover of this artillery barrage and machine guns on Raveleberg spur, pressed forward in groups, taking advantage of dead ground and hedges and presenting few targets to our gunners. By one o'clock large numbers had succeeded in massing along the line of the railway. A message to the batteries brought a quick bombardment which must have done a lot of execution among the enemy, some of whom could be seen escaping to the rear. The advance, however, was not held up and the Germans continued to dribble forward during the afternoon. A hot fire was now raging all along the line, the enemy striving to get to close quarters and being kept back by rifle and Lewis-gun fire.

At about three o'clock the enemy entered a post held by the Lincolns, but the Northumberland Fusiliers counter-attacked and drove them back.

At 5.30 an attack in force was made on B Company and on a Lincoln post on its right. The post gave way, some men of the 10th Lincolns were seen to be surrendering and were heavily fired on. Lieut. J.A. Ancrum, who had assumed command of a few Worcester machine gunners, kept the enemy back with flanking fire till the post was reoccupied by another party of Northumberland Fusiliers.

At 6.30 about thirty men of the 2nd Worcesters retired from their posts on to the posts held by D Company, but were driven back to their line, in the evening the enemy's efforts slackened, rifle fire almost ceased. Even the shelling died down and the night passed quietly. The day's fighting had added about forty to the Highlanders' casualty list.

The enemy's attack on the line of hills had failed. On the right, however, where the 33rd Division — less the 100th Brigade — was fighting, Meteren had been lost and on the left Wytshaete had fallen.

The battle started again at dawn. At 5.30 the enemy put down a heavy barrage on our posts. This continued till seven o'clock, when his infantry — probably fresh troops brought up during the night — advanced all along the line.

The previous day's fighting, although it had strained their physical endurance almost to the breaking point, had added to the Highlanders' confidence in themselves and their rifles. Artillery support was still rather meagre although the arrival of the French batteries had improved matters, but the men were quite prepared to hold on, artillery support or no artillery support — and said as much rather forcefully.

Rifle and Lewis-gun fire held up the attack all along the 100th Brigade front, except on the extreme left where the enemy penetrated a small wood held by a few K.R.R.'s and a party of 25th Divisional Machine Gunners. From here a determined attack was made on the support post of Highlanders in rear, but it was beaten off with some loss to the enemy. Several attempts were made to clear the wood but these failed, the Germans having brought up machine guns.

The K.R.R. post on the left of the wood held on stoutly, while on the right the R.E. manned a communication trench and joined up with the Highlanders. The Germans among the trees were thus isolated and kept under fire from three directions.

The morning's fighting had yielded two prisoners who were brought to Battalion H.Q., shortly after eight o'clock. A rigorous cross-examination extracted from one of them the information that the attack would be resumed almost immediately. This was interesting news; well worth sending back to the guns. The companies in front had also to be warned,

It was on this day that a much respected company commander of the Glasgow Highlanders was guilty of conduct amounting almost to insubordination. Captain McKersie, who among his other accomplishments had a knowledge of machine guns, was busily engaged with one of these weapons which he had 'won', keeping back a swarm of Germans who were attempting to reach his position, his runner came up and told him that Colonel Menzies wanted to speak to him on the telephone. "My compliments to the C.O. and tell him I haven't time to speak to him." The H.Q., signaller of course, was not taking that sort of answer from a company runner, and told him to tell Captain McKersie that he "bloody well had to" come to the telephone. McKersie compromised by abandoning his gun at the third time of asking. He was not long in getting back to it, however, and was relieved to find that it had not been jammed by an apprentice hand during his absence.

The enemy kept up a certain amount of pressure against the 100th brigade during the whole morning. Towards ten o'clock his artillery fire increased, and under a heavy barrage his infantry made a second attack in force. This was pressed with particular determination on B Company's front. Again and again the Germans came on, but each time they were met with steady rifle and Lewis-gun fire and the attacks broke down.

By the afternoon the German infantry had had enough. The fire fight was kept up, but little further effort was made to advance. At 4 o'clock a company of 6th/7th Royal Scots Fusiliers (177th Brigade) were sent up to clear the wood held by the Germans on the left. This counter-attack was supported by fire from the posts on both flanks, but broke down with heavy loss under machine gun fire, the company commander being among the casualties.

At half-past six another effort to regain the wood was made by three companies of the 1st/5th Yorks and Lanes, supported by a barrage in addition to the flanking fire. The Englishmen attacked gallantly, but were unsuccessful and the wood remained in the enemy's possession — his one and only gain for thirty-six hours' fighting against the 100th Brigade.

His efforts elsewhere had met with no better success. At Meteren the 33rd Division, reinforced by the French, was more than holding its own, while on the left determined attacks on Kemmel Hill had been repulsed all along the line.

As on the previous evening darkness brought comparative peace. At 8.30 the enemy's guns quietened down. The day's losses had been about fifty, including two officers, Major J.S. Chalmers killed and Lieut. A.R. Lamberton wounded.

That night the fragmentary 100th Brigade was relieved after what had probably been its most strenuous week of the whole war. The 4th Yorks and Lanes and the 4th K.O.Y.L.I. came up at 11 p.m. With units mixed up as they were the relief was rather complicated, but it was not interfered with by the enemy and was completed by 2.30 a.m.

The Highlanders marched back via Locre to Westoutre behind Mont Noir, a very weary battalion and a very small one compared with what it had been seven days earlier. The casualties had amounted to 406 made up as follows: - officers killed, 7; wounded, 13; other ranks killed, 60; wounded 172; wounded and missing, 6; missing, 148. The missing figures as always, including many killed of whom proof of death had not been obtained. These sacrifices, however, had not been in vain. The battalion had done its full share in stopping the enemy's advance, and more than once had formed a rallying point during the battle. It had been at a certain disadvantage in fighting under the commands of divisions other than its own.

When the 100th Brigade was withdrawn from the of the hills, the battle of the Lys was finished for the time being at least, on this part of the front. On the map the result of the battle was a gain of territory for the enemy varying from eleven to two-and-a-half miles in depth on a thirty-mile front. It was of little use to him. His real object was to destroy the British Army, and in this he had failed.

Chapter 20

SUMMER 1918

At Westoutre the Glasgow Highlanders were among the long expected French reinforcements. The Frenchmen were very spick and span — for Frenchmen. Some good-natured chaff passed between the Jocks and Poilus on the subject, among others, of the very deliberate manner in which the latter had hastened to the battle. The Frenchmen very evidently meant business; a cavalry vedette of theirs had very nearly shot the Colonel, Major Lamberton and Lieut. H.L. Graham — assistant adjutant — as they came through the hills from Dranoutre.

The battalion only spent a few hours at Westoutre, moving in the afternoon three miles westwards to Mont des Cats. This hill stands out at the west end of the Flanders range as prominently as Kemmel does at the east. From the summit, on which a monastery stands, there is a most extensive view all round. But when one sees one can usually be seen, and as the Brigade marched up the hill to the Monastery, in which it was to be billeted, it was probably spotted by the enemy from the region of Bailleul.

In 1914 Mont des Cats had been the scene of a cavalry skirmish, but since then it had reposed in peace. The monks were by no means pleased to see the troops and their misgivings were justified within an hour of the arrival of their guests when a shell came through the roof. Others followed, but by evacuating the upper floors and crowding the men down below, serious loss was avoided. In spite of the shelling, however, one may be sure that all ranks slept soundly.

Next day the usual re-organisation and cleaning up had to be done. The re-organisation, of course, could only be a makeshift for you cannot make, or remake, a battalion without the men. The survivors were not only grateful to their C.O., he had earned the admiration of all ranks; feelings that were entirely reciprocated.

Special Order by Lieut. Colonel A.H. Menzies, DSO. Commanding the Glasgow Highlanders
19-4-18.

'The Commanding Officer wishes to place on record his admiration and pride at the way the Battalion fought during the recent operations. The leadership of the platoon officers and N.C.O's was superb and the way the men responded to their call and carried out their orders exhibited a state of discipline and "Esprit de Corps" worthy of the best traditions of the Glasgow Highlanders and of the Scottish race. Had all units shown the same gallantry and dogged resistance the enemy advance would have been checked from the outset. Your achievements have evoked the praise and admiration not only of the Higher Commands but of all who were in contact with you throughout the operations.'

(Signed) A.H. Menzies, Lt. Colonel

Commanding "Glasgow Highlanders"

One of the Higher Commands testified in similar vein

To G.O.C. 33rd Division.

'Wish to record very grateful appreciation of the services of your 100th Brigade whilst under my command. Brigadier General Baird by his ever ready initiative and untiring energy had very materially assisted me in holding my line. His men were splendid under very strenuous circumstances. Please thank them all.'

From G.O.C. 49th Division,

19th April 1918.

On the 20th the Battalion paraded at 6 a.m. and marched to Noordpeene about three miles west of Cassel; fifteen long miles for the battle-worn troops.

The situation in front was now comparatively quiet, but it was a calm which might be broken any moment. This at least appeared to be the view of the higher command, for while at Noordpeene the Highlanders were ordered to be ready to move on half-an-hour's notice. It was not possible, therefore, to do anything elaborate in the way either of training or recreation.

After a week's respite the Germans again attacked and this time captured Kemmel Hill, which had

been handed over to the French. This reverse was rather a bitter blow. The hill which exhausted and disorganized British troops had held against persistent attacks for two days was thus lost by fresh French troops — they were reputed to have been out of the line for months — in five hours.

The loss of Kemmel necessitated a further withdrawal in the Ypres salient to a line about one mile east of the town. From Zillebeke Lake it then ran southwest through the hills by Locre to Meteren. The repercussion on the 33rd Division was an order to move a short stage nearer the battle. On the morning of the 26th the Highlanders moved to Ste. Marie Cappel, two miles southeast of Cassel. Both the 100th and 19th Brigades were billeted in an aerodrome; most uncomfortable and crowded quarters. When it was evident that the forward move was not to be continued next morning, a billeting party was sent into the village to look for better accommodation. In this it was only partially successful, but in the afternoon the battalion moved into the village, three companies going under canvas.

Great news: the battalion was ordered to move back to Wardrecques. it was not so much that this was clear evidence of a real rest after the hard months on Passchendaele Ridge and the harder fighting at Neuve Eglise, but the survivors of the 1914 Battalion looked forward to renewing happy memories of early days in this, the Battalion's first home on French soil.

The first three miles of the march were done in great style, but at Staple the Brigade was halted and ordered back to Ste. Marie Cappel. The exigencies of the situation evidently did not permit of the Division's being sent so far back. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to continue training in a less romantic spot.

The lessons of Neuve Eglise had to be learned. New schemes of defence had to be practised; the methods of attack so brilliantly demonstrated by our enemy on the Somme and Lys had to be studied and adopted — if possible with improvements.

Before the end of the month several drafts had arrived, 18 officers and 265 men in all, partly making good recent losses. Against this there was a loss of 31 men sent to hospital for various causes resulting from recent hardships.

At length an order came to march back to the St. Omer district, not to Wardrecques, unfortunately, but to le Rons, three miles southwest of it. The men were very fit after their ten days training and accomplished the seventeen miles with no difficulty whatever.

This little move into the back area appeared, however, to be another little staff joke, for the battalion was ordered forward again to Steenvoorde. Embussing at 6 o'clock in the evening and moving via Cassel, the Highlanders were dropped at their destination about midnight.

The weather had broken badly; heavy rain was falling. The resting place for the night was the sodden ground of a field by the roadside. Fortunately the Transport, which had moved earlier, was on the spot and hot soup was in the cookers. And so to bed, in miserable 'bivvies' under wagons or any other shelter that could be found. H.Q. staff were billeted in and under the mess cart. It was one of the most miserable nights, out of the line, in the whole war; reminiscent of the memorable 1915 Territorial Army Manoeuvres in Fife.

Reveille was at the gentlemanly hour of eight o'clock. The battalion was now standing by ready to move at a moment's notice. Kits were cut down to a minimum. Each man was to carry his waterproof sheet, socks, washing and shaving material, rations and 'iron ration' in his pack. No great-coats nor haversacks were to be taken and one man in four had a shovel strapped to his pack. This thorough clearing for action suggested a return to the offensive. No move orders came, however. That night the Highlanders were rather more comfortable, a lot of 'scrounging' for material for shelters. had been done during the day, but the weather was still wet.

Next day the Highlanders were still standing by in the rain and mud, but at an early hour on the 6th they left Steenvoorde with no regrets. Reveille was at 3 a.m., and at 5.30 the battalion marched off along the high road to Poperinghe. One company occupied a farm beyond the east end of the town, the remainder tents. The 33rd Division was taking over from the French the east end of Dickebusch Lake.

Then followed another twenty-four hours of standing by. At the untimely hour of 3 a.m. on the 8th a draft of 84 men arrived. That afternoon the battalion moved forward to 'R.E.' Camp a mile-and-a-half southeast of Poperinghe. Here it stood by again. There was a heavy cannonade in front.

The 98th and 19th Brigades were engaged along with the French on their right in heavy fighting east of Dickebusch Lake. Information gathered from prisoners had indicated an attack at 7.30 a.m. At that

time the French 32nd Division counter-attacked but made little progress. In the confused fighting, that followed — in which it is pleasing to record that the 2nd Argylls and 1st Cameronians greatly distinguished themselves — the Germans succeeded at one time in getting through on the French left. The position was finally restored in the afternoon by the 5th/6th Scottish Rifles who, moving round by the back of the Lake, counter-attacked magnificently and regained all the lost ground. The 100th Brigade accordingly were not required for this action and remained in Reserve.

Next day the Brandhoek Reserve Line was reconnoitred in the neighbourhood of Goedmoet Mill, east of Dickebusch and 5,000 yards behind the front line; but on the 10th the battalion moved back to a hutted camp southeast of Poperinghe. That evening there was very heavy fire between nine and ten o'clock, but nothing of importance was reported. On the morning of the 12th the battalion moved a mile-and-a-half east to one of the Brandhoek camps, A Company going into the Reserve Line as an outpost. On the night of the 13th/14th there was a heavy bombardment of the camp and its surroundings, but no great damage was done.

The battalion remained in Reserve. A certain amount of training was done, but one had to be very circumspect — Kemmel was looking over the hedges. The Second Army Commander, General Plumer, inspected the Brigade, and two days later the Highlanders marched through drenching rain to Watou, five miles west of Poperinghe, and occupied a camp south of the village. Next day was dry and warm. Training was continued under less embarrassing conditions than had obtained at Brandhoek, B and D Companies marched to Cassel for range practice at Mont Recollet.

A Brigade field-day was held on the 29th. As A Company were going to Cassel for musketry that morning and B and D did not return till nearly midday, only C Company and Headquarters participated. The Highlanders acted on the defensive for the benefit of the Worcestershires and K.R.R.C., who had to run about in the heat. After the day's doings were over there was a big 'pow-wow' in which Lieutenant General Hunter-Weston, Major General Pinney, and Brigadier General Baird took part.

On May 30th the battalion (less A Company) moved up towards the line again and occupied a camp about two miles northwest of Vlamertinghe. The march was about nine miles and the weather was now very hot, but an early start enabled most of the distance to be covered before the heat became oppressive. The same consideration regulated the hours of work. Companies started operations in the 'Yellow' Reserve Line at 4.30 a.m. and finished about ten in the forenoon. On June 1st A Company rejoined.

The Highlanders on the night June 6th/7th relieved the 2nd Sherwood Foresters in the front line astride the Ypres-Comines Canal, a mile-and-a-half south of Ypres.

The Division was holding the front from a point 1,200 yards east of Dickebusch Lake to a point 300 yards south of the west end of Zillebeke Lake, with two brigades, the third being in reserve at Brandhoek. Each brigade had two battalions in the line and one in reserve; each battalion had two companies in front and two in support. The front line curved slightly, the right facing southeast, the centre south, and the left southeast again.

The Canal sector of the Dickebusch-Zillebeke line covered 1,000 yards of front. Two companies were in front distributed in a depth of about 500 yards; then came about 600 yards which was not occupied. The support company 'blobs' were 1,000 yards deep while the total depth of the battalion measured back to Battalion H.Q. at Belgian Battery Corner was no less than 2,700 yards. The Canal sector was on the right of the left brigade. The positions of the right brigade were rather shallower, but even there the depth was 1,500 yards or double that of Broodseinde.

The front posts were isolated and could not be visited by day. The right company H.Q. was in a dug-out cut in the bank of the Canal in which there was very little water. A path had been worn far down the bank along the water's edge. It was uneven and in wet weather very slippery. Company H.Q. at the Iron Bridge could be approached by this route by day, but it was generally considered to be more prudent to wait for darkness and go over the open, as in addition to being a favourite target for the enemy's artillery, the canal was enfiladed by machine guns. The support companies had a complete trench system at their disposal, but there were no deep dug-outs. The exact position of the enemy's posts was not accurately known.

The first tour of duty was a quiet one. In the four days two men were killed and three wounded by shellfire. On the 10th the battalion was relieved and moved back to Brandhoek, the 100th Brigade being now in reserve, and occupied the Line'.

To add to their other troubles the troops were inflicted with a severe epidemic of influenza. During the first ten days of June the battalion lost 45 men sent to hospital, nearly all suffering from this scourge.

While at Brandhoek the usual working parties were required, for improving the reserve trenches and digging in telephone lines. Great care had always to be taken to keep out of sight of Kemmel as far as possible. It was a strange country, scarred with trenches and covered with derelict camps. High camouflage screens were erected along the roads.

The transport and 'Minimum Reserve' were stationed at Jans-ter Biezen about two miles west of Poperinghe while the Brigade was in the line. Each time the battalion came back to Brandhoek the Minimum Reserve rejoined, marching up by a by-pass round the north of Poperinghe, which was now scheduled as a dangerous place. When the battalion again went forward a new Minimum Reserve was detailed.

On the evening of the 15th the Highlanders moved up into support in the Vlamertinghe line, taking over from the 5th Scottish Rifles. This was among the batteries, so the battalion participated in the enemy's counter-battery work. One big shell, fortunately a dud, scored a direct hit on the Aid Post.

The battalion took over the Canal sector. This spell in the line was also quiet and uneventful, but Battalion H.Q. at Belgian Battery Corner getting more than it considered its fair share of the shelling. After relief by the 4th King's Liverpools the Highlanders returned to Vlamertinghe. Influenza for the time being was a more serious menace to the strength of the battalion than enemy action. During the last fortnight in June, 6 officers and 63 men went down with it.

On the night of the 30th the Highlanders relieved the 1st Cameronians in the line. The front had been side-stepped 500 yards to the right. C and D Companies took over the front, the latter on the left holding the Canal with Company H.Q. at the Iron Bridge. Besides posts on both sides of the canal, it had Lewis guns dug-in in the actual basin.

At this period great daring was shown by the German aeroplanes. Towards evening they often came over flying very low, apparently trying to spot our posts. Lewis guns were mounted to deal with them. On the night of 3rd/4th July D Company was very heavily shelled. The following night another adjustment was made in the line, D Company being relieved on the canal and taking over from a company of Worcestershires on C Company's right.

Since the end of April the British front had been quiet except for minor operations. On May 27th the Germans had made their first great attack on the French. By June 2nd they had broken through on a 55-mile front from Reims to Noyon and had reached Chateau Thierry on the Marne, a distance of 30 miles. The gain in territory was about equal to that on the Somme but the advance was twice as rapid. The unfortunate British 9th Corps which had been sent to this front for a 'rest' was caught in this offensive, fought heroically, and received great praise from the French Command. The German advance was at length arrested with the aid of large numbers of newly-arrived American troops.

The next German drive was on 9th June on both sides of the new Noyon salient. The western attack resulted in a gain of 9 miles on a 55 mile front from east of Noyon to Montdidier. French counter-attacks on the 11th brought this offensive to an end. The eastern attack southwest of Soissons made little progress.

It was suspected that these attacks on the French were intended to draw away reserves from the main German effort that was still to come — a final overwhelming attack on the British Army. This might be staged either on the Somme front or in Flanders.

It was only natural, therefore, that the higher command should be very anxious to obtain an identification of the troops in front, and accordingly the Highlanders were ordered to make a raid. About 300 yards in front of D Company's posts the canal turned eastwards. The enemy had posts in the canal in front of the bend, and a trench running southwest from it. This trench was chosen as the objective for the raid, which was to be undertaken by 4 officers and 100 men under 2nd Lieut. J. Houston, MM.

On the night of July 5th Houston reconnoitred the ground. An elaborate programme of artillery, machine gun and trench mortar support was arranged. Each company supplied 25 men. The raiders were divided into two parties: 'A' (right) Party, the A and C Company contingents, under 2nd Lieuts. Houston and J. Leggat; and 'B' Party, the B and D men, under 2nd Lieuts. W.C. Johnston and A.A. Miller. Each Party was sub-divided into five sections under an N.C.O.

Four American officers and six N.C.O's arrived for a 48-hours instructional visit. When they heard about the proposed raid one of the officers, 2nd Lieut. Bellamy volunteered to join it. This was against the

Americans' orders, but Bellamy would take no denial and arrayed in a kilt he joined the raiders — unofficially.

The raiders assembled at Battalion H.Q. in the evening. No equipment was worn, each man carried rifle and fixed bayonet, six rounds of ammunition and two bombs. The bayonets were dulled and steel helmets plastered with mud. Zero was fixed at 11.45 p.m.

At half-past ten the raiders moved off from Headquarters. The route was through D Company's position, along the bank of the canal, thence half-right by a track to the 'jumping-off' place. Houston with four men went through the front line at 11.25 p.m. and laid a tape diagonally across the track about 180 yards from the objective, to mark the point of assembly and give the direction of advance. Ten minutes later the raiders followed, 'A' Party leading. Houston was waiting to put the sections in position along the tape. The intention was for 'A' Party to break into the trench and move right returning through A Company's lines, while 'B' Party moved left, returning by the canal and mopping up any posts found there.

Unfortunately the ten minutes allowed for moving to, and assembling at, the tape proved to be insufficient, and many of the sections had not reached it when the barrage came down at Zero. The enemy's counter-barrage was almost instantaneous. The men moving in the dark and suddenly coming under heavy fire got into some confusion. The officers and N.C.O.'s rallied them, but as rifle fire from the objective showed that there was now no chance of surprise, Houston very wisely decided to abandon the raid altogether, and gave the signal "Cease Fire". The troops then retired in good order. His correct appreciation of the situation and prompt decision undoubtedly saved much loss, for the raid had now little chance of success. As it was, the casualties were one missing and five wounded; fortunately the young American officer was not among them.

The following night Houston and Miller went out again on patrol with a few men to reconnoitre a suspected machine gun post. They crawled up till they were perhaps fifty yards from it and found that it was occupied. Next night they took out a fighting patrol. Creeping up again to the same point the patrol rushed the post — to find it unoccupied.

On the night of the 10th the 2nd Argylls took over and the Highlanders moved back to Catterick Camp and the Green Line, Brandhoek. During the ten days in the line a further 3 officers and 32 men went back with influenza, which was making very serious inroads into the strength of the whole Division. Rumours were more persistent than ever that the enemy would shortly launch a great attack on the Salient, but there was no lack of confidence on the part of the troops that they could hold their ground. Behind the forward positions there were several lines of trenches, and every day these became stronger, as the units in support and reserve worked at them.

On July 15th the Highlanders moved up into support in the Vlamertinghe line. The following evening the positions occupied by C and D Companies were heavily shelled. And a shrapnel shell burst on B Company's Headquarters, fatally wounding Captain J.A. Ancrum, MC, and wounding 2nd Lieut. A. Phillips, MC, in the shoulder. In Captain Ancrum the Highlanders lost a most gallant officer. He — and Phillips also — had done exceptionally good work at Neuve Eglise, and he was as popular as he was efficient. A severe loss.

A warning order was issued that from information gathered from prisoners an attack might be expected next day. C and D Companies were moved forward into the Brown Line. At dawn our artillery put down a barrage, but the expected attack did not take place and the day passed quietly.

On the night of the 18th 2nd Lieuts. R.T. Anderson and E.J. de T. Robertson took out a small patrol to locate a suitable objective for a raid. They found a machine gun post which they thought would do very well. Next night these two officers and 2nd Lieut. D.J. Kennedy with 30 men left the front line at 10.45 p.m. The moon shone brilliantly; it seemed almost daylight to those whose lives depended on their movements not being observed. The patrol accordingly could only move very slowly, crawling from cover to cover. They had a considerable distance to go, and it almost seemed that the night would be too short for the job. However, at about one o'clock the moonlight failed and progress became more rapid.

The next difficulty was to find the post. Not a sound could be heard to guide them, but Anderson and Robertson had a good idea of its position. Silently the men, in three parties, surrounded the place indicated to them and gradually closed in on it. It was now about half-past two. Suddenly a challenge in German rang out from the darkness about twenty yards from Anderson's party, and some bombs were

thrown. He and his men rushed forward; Anderson got there first. He found three Germans. Two of them he shot; the third, a large Sergeant-Major, surrendered. The dead were searched for documents and the patrol retired with the prisoner.

At this time the 2nd Battalion, 120th Infantry Regiment of the 30th American Division was attached to the 100th Brigade, and two companies were sent to the Highlanders for instruction. The Americans came from South Carolina and were men of splendid physique. The size of the companies, however, was even more impressive than the stature of the men. The first duty given to them was digging in the reserve line at night. They got down to work quickly and for an hour or two showed themselves handy men with the shovel. Unfortunately the Captain in command had received strict instructions that he was not to incur any loss, so when a few shells came over the word of command was "Beat it, boys" and they "beat it" accordingly.

Their discipline was very good, if unconventional to our ideas. Our men got on very well with them in spite of the difficulty that they did not like our tea and our Jocks did not like their coffee. Their rations apart from coffee seemed to consist largely of pork and beans.

The attachment of the Americans necessitated a readjustment of the battalion in the line. B Company moved into the front line at the Iron Bridge on the canal, D into support behind it at Swan Chateau; both companies coming under the command of the O.C., 16th K.R.R.C. C Company took over Belgian Chateau, a strong point on the Dickebusch Beek 500 yards west of Belgian Battery Corner. To replace these companies two Worcestershire companies and one American were attached to the Highlanders.

Two nights later the Highlanders took over the whole front, the attached American being divided among the companies. B and D being already in their position on the left, all that was necessary was for A and C to take over the right. The front now extended from the Kruisstraathoek-Voormezele road to the canal inclusive, a distance of 1,500 yards. The American reinforcements were very welcome, as our wastage had been heavy. Casualties for the week to 23rd July were one officer and one man killed, one officer and sixteen men wounded, and twenty-two men down with influenza.

The 1st Middlesex took over on the 25th, the Highlanders moving back to Brandhoek, C and D Companies going into the Yellow Line, A and B to Catterick Camp, and H.Q. to Erie Camp. By now the battalion knew the road well and the dangerous points to be avoided or passed hurriedly. Most of the crossroads were very liable to be shelled, that at the Groenen Jaeger Cabaret being a particularly nasty one.

On August 1st we took over the front line again from the Voormezele road to the Bollaart Beek (1,000 yards) with Headquarters and two companies of the 3rd Battalion 119th American Infantry attached. The battalion left Brandhoek at 9 p.m. and the relief was completed by 1.30 a.m. That morning troops of the 6th Division on our right raided the Germans who retaliated by bombarding our positions heavily. C Company, which was on the right front with its H.Q. in a big dug-out in the wood in front of Chateau Sigard, had a number of casualties, and the attached Americans also suffered. The Chateau itself was a place to be avoided, as it seemed to have an enormous attraction for the German gunners who probably thought it was a strong point.

Colonel Menzies decided that he now had too many men in the line. He accordingly withdrew A Company from support to reserve; B Company took over all the support positions with platoons sent back from C and D.

On the night of the 3rd Captain Metcalfe commanding C began the construction of a new line of posts about 200 yards forward. The same night 2nd Lieut. Hendry explored some huts on C Company's front. Failing to find any Germans, he remained all day hoping to ambush and enemy patrol the following night, but he had no luck. Meanwhile another night's work completed the digging and wiring of the new posts, which were occupied.

On the night of the 5th a party of 35 men led by Lieut. Hall and 2nd Lieuts. Johnston and Lennox went out to raid an enemy post on the Bollaart beek, a sluggish ditch which, flowed diagonally across our front and marked the left of the battalion's position. The post which it was intended to surprise was some 500 yards up the beek. The night was wet and very dark. The raiders set out at twenty minutes to eleven in three parties, following each other closely along the beek. They had got about halfway to their objective when the leaders of the column saw a few Germans ahead of them. Hall divided his force with the intention of surrounding the enemy, but before anything further could be done a strong enemy patrol,

estimated to be about fifty strong, attacked from the right with bombs. A sharp bombing fight followed. The Germans had the advantage of surprise and numbers. Some of them appeared to be working round as if to cut off the retreat of our men, so Hall withdrew his force.

The raid had failed with a loss of one killed and ten wounded. The enemy's casualties were unknown, but were probably as great as ours. One Highlander, Pte. Walker of D Company was taken prisoner by six Germans. He was being marched off by his captors, who for once failed in their German thoroughness — they omitted to search him! Five of them got some distance in front leaving the sixth to bring along the prisoner. Walker laid his escort out with a kick, threw a bomb he still had in his possession at the others and made off. The Germans chased him but he hid in the ditch and when all was clear got back to our lines.

The failure of this raid proved that as at Broodseinde, raiding was being overdone. Surprise is essential for success in raiding, and one cannot expect to surprise an enemy who is being visited almost every other night. All the other units in the Division were at the same game — through no fault of their own.

Up to now the Americans had been distributed among our companies by platoons. Now their companies were consolidated and took over complete company areas, one of them relieving C Company on the left front with the exception of the new forward posts which were still manned by Highlanders.

The rest of the eight days' spell in the line was uneventful except for great artillery activity on both sides, from which both the Highlanders and the Americans suffered considerably. At 10 p.m. on the 9th the 4th Kings took over and we moved back to Brandhoek.

The spell of rest was much disturbed by the persistent shelling of Catterick Camp by a high velocity gun. The huts offered no protection whatever. The shells were not heavy, but on the evening of the 11th they followed one another so rapidly that the camp was evacuated for some hours. We had no casualties whatever.

On the 14th the Highlanders took over the extreme left of the divisional front south of Zillebeke Lake. Only A and B Companies went into the line, C and D going to Houtkerque, 6 miles west of Poperinghe for a rest. The relief was carried out from a rendezvous at Belgian Battery Corner under heavy shell fire.

A warning order was received that the 33rd Division was to be relieved by the 50th American Division. Two days later the 2nd Battalion 120th American Infantry took over the line. H.Q., A and B Companies entrained at 'Atherley Junction', Vlamertinghe, from there by light railway to 'Pugwash' for 'Tunnelling Camp'; being joined there by the rest of the battalion. On the 20th the transport left by road for the St. Omer area, and next day the battalion entrained at 'Mendinghem', detrained at St. Omer and marched to billets in Moule.

Moule was a quiet little village about five miles north-west of St. Omer. When we arrived there the harvest was in full swing. The billets were unusually good, the weather excellent, the influenza epidemic was over, and all ranks settled down to a thoroughly enjoyable rest.

On the 24th Major General Sir Reginald Pinney inspected the 100th Brigade. After the presentation of a large number of medal ribbons the units marched past in column of companies, and quarter column, and then advanced in review order. It was the first old-fashioned review that the great majority of those present had ever taken part in, but with only one day's previous practice — it was very well done indeed. In his remarks the Major General, speaking with most impressive sincerity, referred to the extraordinarily good services of his division at Neuve Eglise, services the importance of which it was impossible to exaggerate, and which showed a devotion and steadfastness beyond all praise. He concluded by congratulating the Brigade on the turnout and on the whole conduct of the parade.

In the afternoon all officers and N.C.O's attended an excellent demonstration of drill by a special platoon from. G.H.Q. accompanied by the usual comedians.

A training scheme was commenced, and a big divisional sports programme was being arranged, when move orders came in. Shortly after midnight 27th/ 28th August the battalion entrained at Arques, and after a tedious journey arrived at Bouquemaision, an old haunt of the Highlanders, late in the afternoon. A short march through a heavy shower brought us to our new billet at Beaudricourt.

Chapter 21

THE TARGELLE VALLEY

Beaudricourt, situated about seven miles north of Doullens, was fourteen miles from the front held by the Third Army. The 33rd Division, however, did not form part of General Byng's Army, but was in G.H.Q. reserve. The country was pleasantly undulating — not unlike what the High Wood district had been before the war. The top of each rise seemed to be crowned with a wood; in each wood was hidden a village — Beaudricourt was one of these. Beyond the orchards round the village the roads and fields were unfenced. There was consequently a large area available for training, and if one had, or could borrow, a horse one could canter for miles without let or hindrance.

When the Glasgow Highlanders arrived in this delightful district we did not know how soon we would be called upon to take our places on the enormous battlefield; it might be a matter of a few days or of a week or two, but meanwhile we could enjoy ourselves, train for whatever part G.H.Q. might be pleased to allot to the 33rd Division in the great Autumn Offensive, and look forward more or less philosophically to another winter in the trenches to be followed by victory in 1919.

One of the early items in the training programme was a Brigade lecture on co-operation with tanks. The Division had never had the assistance of these in any of its battles. After the lecture, company and battalion exercises were much enlivened by the presence of be-flagged mules representing tanks. The training was for open warfare — fire and movement as laid down in these great little books 'Infantry Training' and F.S.R. Part 1', and infiltration as practised by the Germans. In order that the fire might be worthy, of the movement a range was constructed for rifle and Lewis gun practice.

An officers' rugby match was arranged against the 16th K.R.R.C. Our team captained by Teddy McCosh won by six points to nil. At cricket we scored a rather unexpected victory against the Worcestershires by 72 runs to 52, and at soccer beat the 5th/ 6th Scottish Rifles by 6 goals to nil. Our own inter-company football competition was won by A Company (Captain Collins) which beat C (Captain Metcalfe) by 1 goal to nil in the final.

The days passed all too quickly. Each item of news of heavy but victorious fighting was a hint that our holiday was drawing to a close. On September 4th an order had been issued allotting embussing points to the various units to be used in the case of a sudden move. On the morning of the 14th we got orders. to be prepared to move on short notice — probably that night. Later in the day the move was ordered for the following evening, but it was again postponed for twenty-four hours. Finally at 7 o'clock in the evening of the 16th September the Highlanders marched out of Beaudricourt to the embussing point at Sus St. Leger about a mile away.

It was dark by the time the buses arrived. We did not know our destination. The first place of note to be passed was Doullens. Turning left here we took the road to Albert and about two hours later threaded our way through the ruins of that town, and up the gradual slope of the Bapaume road. It was now raining heavily and the night was very dark. At la Boisselle, which could be recognized by the white chalk of the great craters, we took the road half-right through Contalmaison — which could not be recognized, for it was not there — and on between the two Bazentins into the valley south-west of High Wood. Here the buses halted. The night was pitch black now, and the rain fell in torrents. As the men unpacked themselves from the buses they were greeted by a loud peal of thunder and vivid flashes of lightning lit up the tragic events of July 1916. A billeting party was waiting by the roadside. Platoons were hurried through the drenching rain to their shelters, German huts and dug-outs almost on the exact spot where Colonel Darling two years before had established his battle headquarters in a shell hole.

By the morning the storm had spent itself and the sun shone. Orders indicated that there would be no forward move during the day, which was spent in resting and exploring the battlefield. Colonel Menzies and other officers and N.C.O's who had been in the Battle of the Somme 1916 — there were not many — took parties over the ground and explained the course of events. Many graves of old comrades were found; many others were not found and never would be.

In many respects present circumstances were similar to 1916. Then as now the Battalion had had a

good rest and was in tip-top condition; then and now it joined a great offensive after it had been for some time under way. But there was one great difference. In 1916 the Battle of the Somme had already proved itself a failure — or at least a partial failure — now the great advance had been a series of brilliant successes.

The tide had turned on the 18th of July. After the four great offensives, two against the British in March and April and the two against the French in May and June, there had been a month's pause. Both Petain and Haig expected to be attacked. meanwhile Foch was building up a reserve. He withdrew the whole of the French forces, eight divisions, from Flanders and asked for four British divisions in addition. Haig sent the 22nd Corps of four divisions, the 15th, 34th, 51st and 62nd, including some of his best troops.

On July 15th the German attack came — against the French on both sides of Reims. Some progress was made, particularly on the south-west of the city where the enemy crossed the Marne and advanced about five miles. But on the 18th Foch counterattacked on the western side of the Reims-Chateau-Thierry-Soissons salient. On the 20th he counterattacked on the eastern side, the British 22nd Corps taking part in this operation, and by August 4th the salient was wiped out and the Second Battle of the Marne was over.

Meanwhile Haig was preparing his counter-stroke. On August 8th Rawlinson's Fourth Army attacked east of Amiens in conjunction with the French First Army on the right. On the first day of the Battle of Amiens four Australian, four Canadian, and two British divisions with 400 tanks advanced five miles on a fifteen mile front and took 13,000 prisoners, while the French took over 3,000. By the 12th the line ran Roye-Albert, an advance of ten miles on a twenty-mile front, and 22,000 prisoners and 400 guns had been taken.

On the 21st Byng attacked successfully on a nine-mile front north of the Ancre. Next day Rawlinson took Albert. Both Armies attacked again on the 23rd, pressing the enemy back. On the 26th Horne joined in on Byng's left and by September 2nd had advanced eight miles on the Arras front. This northern extension of the attack helped the advance further south through the devastated Somme area. Byng took Bapaume on August 29th and Peronne fell to Rawlinson on September 1st. In the Battle of Bapaume the Third and Fourth Armies had with 25 divisions driven back 35 German divisions ten miles across the old Somme battlefield and taken 34,250 prisoners and 270 guns. The First Army had taken 18,850 prisoners and 200 guns.

The enemy was now in retreat, fighting rear-guard actions against the pursuing forces of the Fourth, Third and First British Armies. On the right the French were also advancing. Beyond them the Americans between 12th and 15th September nipped out the St. Mihiel salient. In the north the enemy was evacuating the Lys salient closely pursued by Birdwood's new Fifth Army which by September 18th had reached the outskirts of Armentieres and La Bassée — all the Cuinchy brick stacks were British at last.

The Glasgow Highlanders now belonged to the 5th Corps (Lieutenant General Chute), which was advancing on the extreme right of the Third Army. There were four divisions in the Corps: the 17th, 21st, 33rd and 38th(Welsh).

In the early hours of 18th September the Highlanders moved off from High Wood. It was again a soaking wet night. A march of twelve miles past the rubbish heaps representing Longueval, Lesbœufs and 1e Transloy brought the battalion to Lechelle. The Brigade Minimum Reserve, was left at Lesbœufs.

Lechelle was beyond the limits of the old Somme battlefield; there were therefore trees and hedges and the village, although badly knocked about, still existed. The battalion was well housed in German huts. Fighting was going on in front; the enemy had retired over the Canal du Nord about a mile to the east, and the 5th Corps was established beyond it.

Next morning a short move was made over the canal to Equancourt. This village was too dilapidated to be of any use, and besides was a favourite target for the Boche guns, so the battalion marched through it and bivouacked beyond. There were some trenches, but no shelter from the weather. Wood and corrugated iron were to be had from a big dump at Fins half-a-mile farther on, and before dark everyone was under cover in the trenches or along a sunken road, which was christened Rouken Glen.

Ten miles beyond the Canal du Nord there was a much more serious obstacle — in fact several obstacles. First came the line the enemy had held after the Battle of Cambrai, then his line before that battle. Then came the St. Quentin Canal and beyond that, greatest of all, the Hindenburg Line. Haig had

already decided to break through the Hindenburg Line before the winter. Did his troops generally share their Chief's optimism? One thinks not. The infantry had too many bitter memories of failure in the past against strong positions, and the strength of the Hindenburg Line had become a legend.

The 21st, 17th and 38th Divisions had attacked on the 18th in conjunction with troops on both flanks and had established themselves in the post-Cambrai trench system between the east of Epehy and the west of Villers-Guislain. 3,500 yards further on was the enemy's main line of defence, the pre-Cambrai system, beyond which the ground fell abruptly to the Canal.

The 19th and 98th Brigades took over and on the 21st renewed the attack. With no tanks to help them these Brigades after very heavy fighting, in which the 1st Cameronians, 5th/6th S.R., 2nd Argylls, and 4th Kings lost heavily, succeeded in gaining an intermediate trench line running from Villers-Guislain southwards across the Targelle Valley.

On the night 22nd/23rd the 100th Brigade relieved the 19th on the right of the divisional front, the Worcestershires and K.R.R.C. going into the front line and the Highlanders into Brigade reserve in the line which had been taken over from the 21st Division.

Forty-eight hours later the Highlanders relieved the K.R.R.C., B Company taking over the front line next the Worcestershires with D on its left, and C in support. Headquarters and A Company occupied a sunken road which was continually enfiladed from Villers-Guislain. On D Company's left a pocket of Germans still held out between our trench and the 98th Brigade, and a brisk exchange of rifle grenades was kept up with these people.

At dawn Major Teddy McCosh, MC, who was now commanding B Company in Meath Post, was studying the ground over which the battalion was soon to attack, when he was badly wounded by a rifle grenade. He was carried back to the dressing station at Lechelle where he died. His death was felt as a personal loss by every officer and man of the battalion, in which he had served since 1914. He had been offered tempting staff appointments on several occasions, but had always insisted on remaining with the battalion he loved. Mobilized as its most junior subaltern, he had commanded the battalion with distinction during the battle on the Menin Road in 1917, and had acted for long periods as Second-in-Command. A Cambridge Rugby Blue, he took the keenest interest in all regimental games. Always cheery, always fearless, his popularity extended beyond the battalion through the Brigade and Division.

The Highlanders were now occupying the centre of the Targelle Valley, with the Worcestershires and —the 98th Brigade on the south and north slopes respectively. The Valley from crest to crest was about 2,000 yards wide, and 1,700 yards in front was the main enemy position Pigeon Trench. Beyond the Worcestershires the left flank of the Fourth Army was up in line, but Villers-Guislain, a fair-sized town on the high ground overlooking our left rear, was still held by the enemy. Leith Walk, a road — sunken for the greater part of the way — led down the valley for 1,000 yards then turned half-left up the northern slope. About 300 yards in front of, and parallel to, our position was Gloster Road, also sunken, with other sunken roads and trenches behind it. Leith Walk, which cut our line at the pocket of Germans, and Gloster Road were both occupied by the enemy, who also held trenches along both the south and north slopes. We were accordingly looking into a box into which the enemy could fire from three sides. In the centre of the valley 400 yards short of Pigeon Trench was a large quarry, 'Pigeon Quarry'.

At dawn on 27th September a big attack was launched by the 4th, 6th, 17th, and Canadian Corps on our left, to bring the main body of the Third and First Armies up in line with the Fourth Army and so enable Rawlinson's artillery to bombard the formidable defences of the Hindenburg Line without the obstruction of fire from the left flank. The day's fighting, the roar of which could be distinguished in our own trenches beyond the local bombardment, was successful, our own 52nd Division in the centre south of Moeuvres playing a particularly distinguished part., Next day our troops reached Marcoing on the St. Quentin Canal, and the Germans evacuated Gouzeaucourt north-west of Villers-. Guislain.

The Fourth Army was now going to attack the Hindenburg Line on a twelve mile front between Holnon and Vendhuile with 9th, 2nd American and 3rd Corps, and a strong force of tanks, In front of the Americans and the right of the 3rd Corps the Canal goes through a tunnel 6,000 yards long. The 33rd Division was ordered to co-operate by advancing down the Targelle Valley at dawn on the 29th to secure the ground covering the crossings of the canal. As a preliminary, and a very necessary one, Villers-Guislain was to be captured by a night attack.

Brigade orders were issued at 9.50 p.m. on the 28th. The 2nd Worcestershires were to advance

along the southern spur, with Pigeon Trench as their objective. The Glasgow Highlanders down the bottom and northern slope of the valley — their objective was Pigeon Trench from its lowest point to Leith Walk on their left. The attacks were therefore slightly divergent, the Worcesters advancing due east, the Highlanders rather northeast. Special platoons were to be detailed by both battalions to get in touch along the sector of Pigeon Trench, about 500 yards, which was not being attacked frontally. On the Highlanders' left the 98th Brigade was ordered to advance along the northern spur. The advance was to be covered by a creeping barrage by the 33rd Divisional Artillery moving at the rate of one hundred yards in four minutes. There were no heavy guns available, and no tanks.

The gap between the Worcestershires and Highlanders was to be covered by machine gun fire, and in addition four machine guns were to advance with each battalion. Close support by trench mortars was provided for and R.E. parties were attached to each battalion to deal with suspected booby traps. When Pigeon Trench was secured, patrols were to be pushed out beyond. The K.R.R.C. was in Brigade Reserve with orders to push down to the canal at Ossu as soon as its passages there were secured.

Although operation orders were only issued late on the 28th General Baird had already explained his intentions to battalion commanders. Indeed the attack had originally been planned for the 28th, but had been postponed as impracticable, and during the afternoon he had reported to 5th Corps that in his opinion success could not be expected unless the attack were assisted by tanks or more artillery, or unless the enemy's machine guns were effectively blinded by a heavy curtain of smoke. But his remonstrance was unavailing. It was essential to secure the success of the decisive attack further south, and neither guns nor tanks were sufficiently numerous to be spared. The orders must stand.

From the Highlanders' point of view the task was indeed formidable. An advance down the valley would be liable to direct enfilade fire from both flanks unless the Worcestershires on the right, and the 98th Brigade on the left made rapid progress. The Worcestershires in their turn had their right badly exposed, while the 98th Brigade's task was complicated by the failure of the night attack on Villers-Guislain. Formidable tasks were no new experience for the units belonging to the 33rd Division.

During the night tapes were laid in front of our trenches and before dawn B and D Companies, formed up on them, with B on the right. A Company occupied the front line ready to go forward as support. C Company (less No.9 Platoon) was kept in hand, as reserve. No.9 Platoon under Lieut. A. R. Lamberton was given the duty of clearing out the pocket of Germans on our front line at Leith Walk.

In the grey dawn of a misty morning, at ten minutes to six the artillery barrage opened. For four minutes trench mortars bombarded the Leith Walk pocket, then Lamberton dashed forward with his platoon. The Highlanders jumped into the trench, bayoneted the garrison and bombed the dug-outs. Lamberton then advanced along the trench towards Leith Walk. The Germans were now putting up a fight with bombs, but Sergeant Beaton, jumping out of the trench, ran along the top throwing bombs into it. A number of Germans were killed, the platoon got forward and two prisoners were taken.

Lamberton's final objective was the Leith Walk-Gloster Road crossroads, 300 yards in front, but about forty yards short of Leith Walk the trench he was in became shallow and open to machine gun fire from both sunken roads. This fire was so heavy that an advance over the open was out of the question, and the platoon could only hold the position it had won and keep the enemy in front under rifle fire.

On the right the main attack had gone forward simultaneously with Lamberton's. The field guns did their best, but the four minutes' barrage was rather thin. Then the Highlanders advanced through the mist, B and D Companies moving side by side in two lines followed by A Company in section columns. As soon as our men showed themselves three advanced machine guns opened fire, causing some loss including Captain K. B. Thomson commanding B Company, wounded.

The posts were quickly rushed, a few Germans were bayoneted, one or two surrendered, the remainder escaped in the fog. The Highlanders went on, and the centre reached Gloster Road. Both flanks, however, were held up; those on the right by machine gun fire from Kildare Avenue a trench on the southern ridge, the left by fire from Leith Walk. All available Lewis guns now brought these machine guns' nests under fire, and the whole line got across Gloster Road.

Casualties up to now were 4 officers and about 80 men. In addition to Captain Thomson wounded, three very gallant young officers had been killed: Lieut. G. G. Taylor, 2nd Lieut. A. M. Bruce, and 2nd Lieut. J. J. A. Ritchie.

The fog was now thicker, and under its cover the Highlanders continued the advance. Heavy fire

was still coming from both flanks, but it was now unaimed and more or less ineffective. The fog was both a blessing and a curse; a blessing because it screened our men, for the time being, from the murderous fire, a curse because it destroyed the cohesion of the advance yet enabled the Highlanders to reach an isolated position far beyond the troops on their flanks.

The three companies were now considerably mixed up; indeed as companies they had ceased to exist. The leaders for most of the time could only see a few yards, and could only control small groups within the range of their vision, but officers and N.C.O's carried on.

The enemy when met with seldom waited long enough for our men to get to close quarters. with them, but escaped in the fog. Heavy machine gun fire from the left now caused our left flank under Lieut. W.C. Johnstone to swing round to deal with it. His party dwindled till he had only twelve men with him, and further progress seemed hopeless. The attack had been in progress for nearly an hour, Johnstone had advanced about 800 yards, half-way to the final objective, but he was now completely isolated with his small party, and had no idea where the rest of the battalion was. He sent back a message saying that he was held up by machine guns, and giving the map reference of their position. He then went off to the right to try to find the main attack, but could find no trace of it. The centre and right had gone on.

His message was received at H.Q. at 6.50 a.m. Johnstone's position was reported to the artillery.

Meanwhile No.9 Platoon had been reinforced by No.11 and by seven o'clock the Leith Walk-Gloster Road cross-roads had been captured, and a post established there. Endeavours were now made to get in touch with the 1st Middlesex but without success. On the right also the Worcestershires had not succeeded in reaching Gloster Road, their leading platoons having been wiped out by machine gun fire.

The Highlanders in the valley were now in a most precarious position. They could hold on to the position won, or even advance further, as long as the fog lasted, but if it cleared they would almost inevitably be wiped out. Lieut. Johnstone was ordered to withdraw to Gloster Road and dig in there. He had now collected some stragglers and with thirty men and an equal number of prisoners he reached Gloster Road. The road, however, was enfiladed by machine guns from the right so Captain Lamberton ordered him to withdraw further to the line of the Germans' original front posts and consolidate there.

Lieuts. D.P. Brodie, MC, J.C.Dewar, Leggat, and Menzies, leading mixed parties of men belonging to B, D and A Companies had penetrated about 1,000 yards into the enemy's positions. During the advance many of the junior N.C.O's had shown excellent leadership, particularly Corporal Duncan McLean who lead charges against several machine gun posts before he was wounded. Lieut. Dewar was also wounded about the same time.

Colonel Menzies now had definite information that the Worcestershires were back in their original positions. He had had messages from Brodie and Leggat reporting progress. They were digging in pending further instructions. The fog was still very thick. At 8.45 a.m. he sent orders to Brodie to withdraw from his position. Unfortunately the enemy intercepted this message. At half-past ten a last message was received from Brodie asking for instructions.

By this time the fog had cleared and the enemy shell-fire increased. Over 1,000 yards in front fifty or sixty of our men could be seen near Pigeon Quarry. They were completely isolated. The enemy worked round their flanks. Machine guns opened on them from all directions. Trench mortars bombarded them from Leith Walk.

Our guns, machine guns and Lewis guns gave what assistance they could but the enemy worked round Brodie's right, and covered by machine gun fire from Leith Walk reached his position. Lieut. Leggat, Corporal S. H. Johnston and a few men burst through the Germans and escaped, the rest were killed or captured. Brodie himself avoided capture by feigning death, and managed to get away after dark.

The German artillery-fire was now concentrated on our old and new front lines. At 11 a.m., it was decided to abandon all that remained of the captured positions. Our casualties now amounted to 9 officers and 350 men. A, B and D Companies were down to platoon strength, and all four could only muster 174 rifles. Movement was observed along the German communication trenches and a counter-attack was expected. The Worcestershires who themselves had lost 11 officers and 230 men, took over part of our front line, and the Brigade Pioneer Platoon was sent up as a reinforcement. The Germans, however, confined themselves to artillery fire.

There was no change in the situation during the afternoon. At night patrols went out, and under cover of these, thirty-five wounded were brought in. This work had to be hurried as a bombardment was

ordered for midnight, but every available man worked with a will and all the wounded that could be found were safely carried back.

During the night enemy machine guns were active all along the front, but at dawn all was quiet. Patrols which were sent forward reported that the enemy had retired. At 11 a.m. the battalion advanced down the Targelle Valley unopposed, and occupied Pigeon Trench, which was found to be a deep well constructed trench protected by wire. Contact was established with the 2nd Worcestershires on the right and 1st Middlesex on the left. Patrols were pushed out in front and the ground up to the canal was found to be clear of the enemy.

The valley was strewn with our dead. The Highlanders as they marched down the valley naturally thought bitterly of the heavy price that had been paid the previous day in their vain endeavour to cross the same ground. Their defeat, however, had really been a victory. The efforts of the 100th Brigade had helped the Fourth Army to break the Hindenburg Line both by drawing fire and reinforcements from the crucial point further south.

On the right the 1st, 46th and 52nd Divisions had crossed the canal and stormed the Hindenburg Line. In the centre, although not equally successful the Americans backed up by the 5th Australian Division had also made a good advance, while on the left the 18th and 12th Divisions had reached the high ground overlooking Vendhuile. Simultaneously the Third Army had progressed in the direction of Cambrai.

The Battle of the Hindenburg Line was only part although by far the most important part, both in difficulty and results — of a larger scheme. In Flanders the Second Army and the Belgian Army with French troops attached had attacked on the 28th and were rapidly pushing the enemy back on a wide front. The French and Americans had also started an offensive towards Mezieres.

Chapter 22

THE RIVER SELLE

The Glasgow Highlanders remained in Pigeon Trench for a few days after the Targelle Valley action. It was still intended to push the 19th Brigade across the canal, but the bridges had been destroyed, and the enemy appeared to be holding the opposite bank along which he had entrenchments. About 2,000 yards beyond was the Hindenburg Line, a double line of trenches thickly wired. Then came the single Le Catelet-Nauroy Line 2,000 yards back, with the Beaufort — another double line — 2,000 yards beyond it,

During the morning of October 1st our observers reported a large German party apparently carrying back ammunition from Kingston Quarry about 700 yards beyond the canal. A message to the artillery was followed by a salvo which dispersed the enemy.

General Baird was most anxious to know how and in what strength the enemy was holding the canal. Hitherto we had only patrolled the near bank by night. It was decided that a daylight patrol was necessary. Accordingly just before dawn on the 3rd Lieut. D. T. Livingston, MC, MM, Corpl. Paterson and Pte. Manders set out to investigate, taking a telephone with them. They took up their position in some bushes at the entrance to a dug-out overlooking the canal bank south of Honnecourt and, connecting up the telephone with Battalion Headquarters, waited for daylight.

They were 1,200 yards in front of Pigeon Trench and could observe a considerable area which was dead ground from that viewpoint. After an hour or so movement, could be seen near a lock in front of the patrol, at Kingston Quarry and at other points. Livingston reported all this, the guns were put on to various targets, and this shooting induced the Germans to get back into cover.

At about 10 o'clock Livingston went forward with the intention of crossing at the lock, but he had only got a few yards when he was fired on by a sniper and a machine gun. He lay low for a time and then crawled back. Private Manders then made an attempt with no better result. These movements drew machine gun fire on the patrol's hiding place, but the only damage it did was to cut the telephone wire. Corporal Paterson went along the line, found the break and mended it, all the time being under fire.

Until half-past eleven the three lay still. All seemed quiet now, and Livingston determined to cross. If he succeeded the others were to follow. He reached the canal and crossed at the lock without being fired at. In front were some houses, one of which he entered. Looking through a hole in the wall he saw four Germans in the back garden. He fired at them with his revolver but missed and they made off. Paterson and Manders now joined him. They had got across the canal but not without drawing fire, which however, did them no harm.

Paterson was now at the end of his tether — his telephone wire had given out. Not to be beaten he searched around, found some derelict German wire and joined it up.

Livingston and Manders then walked coolly, perhaps too coolly, up the road to Kingston quarry. At the quarry they saw a machine gun, but no sentry. They then went right up to the quarry and looked in. It was full of Germans, whose shouting and confusion was evidence of their surprise and consternation at being trapped as they may well have thought. Livingston had 'lifted' Germans before — at Broodseinde — but this time there were far too many of them. Manders threw his bag of rations in the face of the nearest. Livingston emptied his revolver among them, and both bolted down the road. They had stirred up a veritable wasps' bike. Shots rang out from all sides, but the two got through without being hit and rejoined Paterson who, with the telephone, was hiding a few hundred yards down the road.

The whole scene could be seen from Pigeon Trench where General Baird, Colonel Menzies and Colonel Butler, C.R.A. 33rd Division were watching. It seemed to them that nothing could save the patrol now. Colonel Butler said that he would use every gun in the Division to get them out. Taking the telephone, he asked Livingston if he could hold on where he was for two minutes. Livingston said he could. He then told him to wait till the first shell burst on the quarry, then to return by exactly the same way as he had gone out.

Colonel Menzies sent out a platoon under Lieut. Alexander to give covering fire. A few minutes later the batteries got busy, and plastered the quarry and the area on both sides of the line of retreat. Under

cover of this fire the three Highlanders got back unhurt. They reached Pigeon Trench at 5 p.m., having been out for more than twelve hours.

By exposing themselves and drawing the enemy's fire, they had revealed the Germans' dispositions for the defence of the canal. Possibly their action prevented a premature attempt to cross, and experiment, which might have cost the 19th Brigade heavy losses.

The evening of the Honnecourt patrol the 19th Brigade came forward, not to cross the canal immediately, but to relieve the 100th in Pigeon Trench. The Cameronians took over from the Highlanders who marched back up the Targelle Valley and occupied the trenches south of Villers-Guislain. Except for a few bombs dropped by aeroplanes, the enemy gave little trouble, but the weather was cold and very wet. Present discomforts and recent losses did not depress the spirits of the troops. On September 30th the 33rd Division had wired.

'Third Army reports Bulgaria has surrendered unconditionally.'

Germany had lost one of her allies as well as the Hindenburg Line.

What the battalion needed most now was a wash. Baths were improvised by lining some shell-holes with canvas or similar material and the cooks provided hot water; thus tepid baths were made available for all. A draft of fifty men arrived, and the personnel of the Minimum Reserve were changed over.

Sunday October 6th was too wet for a Church Parade. This was all the more regrettable, because it was Padre Gossip's last Sunday with the battalion. Duty called him home very much against his will, as we all knew. He had spent a year with us during which he had taught us, among many other things, to regard him with a very deep affection. The padre visited the men in their shelters. Perhaps after all this was the kind of leave-taking he preferred. His interest had always been personal one.

The effects of the breaking of the Hindenburg Line and the Ypres offensive were now widespread. The Germans were in retreat on the Lens-Armentieres front. In the south however, the French and Americans were not getting forward very rapidly. On our immediate right after a week of hard fighting the Fourth Army had broken through the Beaurevoir Line in the face of fierce resistance, during which the enemy had made several successful counter-attacks. On October 5th the 38th Division had moved round through the Fourth Army area and occupied the Beaurevoir Line on our front, with the 21st Division on its left. The British line now ran to the south-western outskirts of Cambrai. The 19th Brigade crossed the canal and occupied the Hindenburg Line.

On the morning of October 8th the Second Battle of le Cateau began with an assault by the French First and the British Fourth, Third and First Armies, on the whole front between St. Quentin and Cambrai; the 38th and 21st Divisions leading, the advance of the 5th Corps, supported by the 33rd and 17th. By nightfall the British line had advanced an average depth of three miles. On the right the French gained about one mile. The 38th Division after heavy fighting cleared Villers-Outreaux with the assistance of tanks and captured Malincourt in the afternoon.

Progress had been sufficiently rapid to enable the whole 33rd Division to move forward in depth by the evening. The 19th Brigade was ordered to pass through the 38th Division at dawn on the 9th. It was to be followed by the 98th, and at dusk the 100th moved off from Villers-Guislain and marched down the Targelle Valley for the last time.

The Brigade was under the command of Lieut. Col. A.H. Menzies, in the temporary absence of General Baird. Major A.K. Reid commanded the Highlanders, with Lieut. H.L. Graham as adjutant.

It was pitch dark by the time the battalion had reached Pigeon Trench where a halt was to be made for the night. They had scarcely got settled down in the trenches and a few excellent deep dug-outs when orders came in that the Brigade was to be over the canal by daylight, and that the crossing was to be reconnoitred at once.

Before four o'clock next morning the battalion was on the move again, marching in the dark down the steep road to Honnecourt. Crossing the canal by two infantry bridges at the lock south of Honnecourt, the Highlanders marched up the eastern slope as dawn was breaking. The Brigade assembled in front of the wire of the Hindenburg Line west of la Terriere. The transport which had gone round by a bridge in Honnecourt soon arrived, and before long an excellent breakfast was issued from the cooks. The morning was bright but cold. The troops were in fighting order, wearing leather jerkins and carrying waterproof sheets. Greatcoats had been dumped. Each man carried one bomb and one flare for signalling

positions to aeroplanes. Rifle grenadiers had five grenades and half the men carried tools on the scale of one pick to three shovels.

Shortly before mid-day the Brigade moved forward, the Glasgow Highlanders leading. Ammunition pack animals, Lewis gun limbers, cooks and the medical cart accompanied the battalion. The Brigade Reserve, two S.A.A. limbers per battalion followed the column under the command of Captain McNaughton, our transport officer.

For three miles after leaving la Terriere the route lay due east. After passing through Villers-Outreaux, a considerable town which had been badly knocked about, the Brigade moved north-east to Malincourt. At the entrance to the village the Germans had blown up the road, and it was with some satisfaction that we saw a party of German prisoners hard at work repairing the damage. While the battalion was making a detour to avoid this crater General Pinney passed. Giving us his usual cheery greeting he called out that everything was going splendidly.

The way now led across country to Deheries where Brigade Headquarters were established, the Highlanders bivouacking about 1,000 yards beyond in the south corner of Gard Wood, Walincourt. Here were found comfortable quarters for the night in some German huts which bore signs of a very hurried departure. During the night the country was lit up with burning German dumps.

The 19th Brigade had had a triumphant day's advance. In co-operation with the 4th Cavalry Division the 5th/6th Scottish Rifles had taken Clary. Bertry was occupied in the afternoon, Troisvilles in the evening.

Brigade orders issued at 11.55 p.m. stated that the 98th Brigade would go through the 19th at dawn, cross the River Selle and establish itself on the high ground beyond. The 100th Brigade would be in support and would follow at 2,000 yards distance. The 16th K.R.R.C. and Glasgow Highlanders were to advance south and north of Clary respectively, the 2nd Worcestershires following 1,000 yards in rear.

At 5 a.m. the Highlanders were on the move again. The advance was over open country well clear of the roads, in widely extended artillery formation. The direction was still north-east. There was some shelling, particularly as the battalion made its way through some intricate hedge and orchard country around Clary, but no casualties. The troops were in high spirits, and the inhabitants of the villages turned out to cheer the columns as they went by. At Bertry one old gentleman was good enough to hand to Major Reid one round of S.A.A. which he had found and was most anxious should not be wasted.

Many of the houses occupied by the villagers had white flags flying from them. One most satisfactory feature of the advance was that the weak resistance of the enemy had made it unnecessary to shell the villages, consequently there had been no casualties among the inhabitants caused by British guns. The Germans, however, after they retired were not equally scrupulous. The poor people, although they must have possessed very little food or drink were most pressing in their offers of refreshments, which of course were not accepted.

As the Highlanders marched down hill from Bertry to Troisvilles, over ground made historic by the Battle of the Cateau in August 1914, the sight which met their eyes was a memorable one. The wide hollow east of Troisvilles was covered with the horses and men of the Cavalry Division. The troopers had bumped into the enemy on the Selle, found the position strongly held, and it was now the duty of the infantry to turn the Germans out.

The battalion reached Troisvilles about mid-day and halted there; the 98th Brigade had not been able to get across the Selle.

On the 8th and 9th the British line had been advancing rapidly in a broad curve with the Germans retreating rapidly before it. The depth of conquered territory was greatest at the junction of the Fourth and Third Armies, the 5th Corps having advanced 14 miles in two days to the Selle between Montay and Neuville. On the right the Fourth Army had reached the outskirts of Le Cateau. On the left Cambrai had been taken and our troops had advanced three miles east of it.

During the 10th the flanks came up; the Fourth Army reached the line of the Selle facing east, but on our left beyond Neuville our Third and First Armies had not got as far as the river. The line instead running through St.Hilaire to the Scheldt at Thun-St. Martin and facing north-east. As our troops approached the Selle the enemy's resistance had stiffened, and it was anticipated that he would make a stand on the river. The position was one of great natural strength, especially that portion of it in front of the Third Army.

That night we bivouacked on the outskirts of Troisvilles. Owing to the great concentration of cavalry in the area the danger of a bombardment was very great, so taking no chances we dug in at once. The afternoon and night, however, passed quietly, only a few shells coming over and most of these fell on the village where a few civilians were killed. The German artillery's neglect of the exceptional target presented to it at Troisvilles speaks volumes for the disorganization caused by their hurried retreat. They had the guns.

On the 11th the situation remained practically unchanged. The Cavalry Division was withdrawn, and it was reported that the 98th Brigade had two posts on the eastern bank of the river. It was decided that the 5th Corps would again attempt to cross and establish itself on the high ground beyond. As our rapid advance had made it impossible to bring up an adequate supply of artillery ammunition, the attack could not be supported by a barrage; it was therefore decided to make a surprise attack before dawn on the 12th.

The day was spent in conferences, reconnaissance preparations for the attack. General Bair had returned and taken over command, but he retained Colonel Menzies on the Brigade Staff.

Troisvilles lies 5,000 yards south-west of the Selle at Montay. The river flows through a well marked valley of which the south-western slopes are very gradual. Beyond the river the ground is higher, rising more steeply to a height of about 200 feet above the river. Opposite our front were three spurs. Along the foot of them and about 100 yards from the river lay a road and about 300 yard up the slope there was a railway. This ran through cuttings in front of the spurs; on embankments opposite the intervening ravines.

The 5th Corps was doing a little private show of its own. It was attacking on a two-divisional front the 100th Brigade of the 33rd Division on the right the 52nd Brigade of the 17th Division on the left. On the 100th Brigade front the Glasgow Highlanders were to attack up the south-western face of the centre spur. Two companies of the 16th K.R.R.C. were to attack up the north-western face of the same spur, the other two tackling the next spur in touch with the 52nd Brigade on their left. The K.R.R.C. had not been heavily engaged in the Targelle Valley and were probably twice as strong as the G.H.

The final objective was a line 2,000 yards beyond the river on the plateau overlooking the village of Forest. The Highlanders were also to throw out a defensive flank covering the right. One section of the 33rd Machine Gun Battalion was detailed to go forward with each attacking battalion. The R.E. were to put bridges over the Selle during the night covered by two companies of the 2nd Worcestershires, the remainder of the Worcestershires being in reserve.

It was an ambitious scheme and the most difficult part of it fell to the Highlanders. The battalion could only muster for the battle 19 officers and 337 other ranks, including Headquarters. Its attack would be exposed to direct flanking fire from the spur overlooking Montay, and its one chance of success seemed to depend on surprising the enemy and reaching the high ground before daylight. The hope of a surprise was lessened by reports that the enemy had wired the line of the railway.

The attack was to be supported by artillery fire on selected points, and by direct machine gun fire on the railway along the front of the Montay spur, starting at zero minus two minutes. Zero was fixed at 5 a.m. and units were ordered to be at their points of assembly beyond the river an hour earlier. Guides for the approach march were provided. Brigade headquarters would be at Rambourlieux Farm overlooking the Selle. Battalion Headquarters were also detailed in Brigade orders, the Highlanders' being Montay Chateau on the Montay-Neuvilly road.

At midnight after an issue of soup, the Highlanders moved off, every man carrying a pick or a shovel. The night was dark. Two guides, Argyll runners from the 98th Brigade Headquarters were picked up. The column marched up through Troisvilles to the Inchy-Le Cateau road, a distance of about one mile; turning right it followed the road for another mile, then struck half-left across country to the 2nd Argylls' H.Q. near the top of a ravine down which a path led to Montay. Down this path lay the battalion's route to its assembly point. The ravine had the disadvantage of being a well-marked feature of the landscape, and, might therefore attract shell-fire, but except for a road which was even more likely to do so, it was the only way into the valley which was known to be practicable for a night march.

Major Reid, anxious to avoid the ravine if possible, went ahead and saw Major A.G.C. Colquhoun, who was commanding the 2nd Argylls. His H.Q. was being mildly bombarded with mustard gas, so the interview had to be conducted through masks. The Argylls had been using the ravine for communication

with their posts on the river and knew of no practicable route across country. It was therefore decided to go by the ravine, and the march was continued as originally ordered.

Major Reid and Lieut. Robertson, acting intelligence officer, cut across country to reconnoitre the crossings and assembly points, while Captain J.R. Lamberton led the battalion down the ravine accompanied by Captain J. Walker, MC, (G.S.O.3, 33rd Division) who had volunteered to act as guide for the second half of the march.

Unfortunately our distrust of the ravine proved only too well justified. The Germans shelled the whole slope, but their fire was heavier in the ravine than elsewhere, and cost the battalion about twenty casualties. H.Q. Company suffered most severely, several signallers being lost. Among the killed was Lieut. D.F. Brodie, MC, who had behaved with great gallantry in the Targelle Valley. He had come to France in the ranks of A Company in 1914 and had only recently rejoined after winning his MC, while serving with the 6th H.L.I. Another heavy loss to the battalion was Sergeant Orr, Signalling Sergeant, who was also killed.

The march was completed without further loss. Reaching Montay at the foot of the ravine the battalion turned left along the Neuville road for half-a-mile, then moved down through orchards to the river, crossed the bridge and reached its assembly point between the river and the road. H.Q. Company broke off at Montay Chateau, and the Signallers got in touch with Brigade on the telephone.

The bridges had been put across the Selle without any interruption. In addition to the covering party of Worcestershires there was a small post of the 2nd Argylls on the road. This post now withdrew. The Highlanders formed up silently in close touch with the K.R.R.C. below the road, in dead ground from the railway, which the enemy was holding. While the companies were getting into position, heavy machine gun fire was opened from the railway but the bullets passed harmlessly overhead.

The formation was C Company (Captain W.B. Metcalfe) on the right, A Company (Lieut. C.A. Baird) on the left, supported by D Company (Captain J.W.H.B. Morgan) and B Company (Captain Cullen) respectively. The battalion was too weak to provide any reserve beyond H.Q. Company; and as the best hope of success lay in carrying the railway and climbing the spur before daylight, it had been decided to give as much weight to the initial attack as possible. The need for a reserve was also lessened by the fact that the two Worcestershire companies had orders to consolidate and hold the railway when it was taken.

There were already signs of dawn when at 5 o'clock the leading platoons crossed the road. As soon as they began to climb the slope beyond, heavy machine gun fire was opened from the line of the railway 200 yards up the hill, and from the spur on the right. At the same time a heavy barrage fell on the road and the ground between it and the river. The Highlanders pressed on in spite of heavy loss, but failed to reach the cutting which was protected by four barbed wire fences. In the first few minutes of the attack Lieuts. Baird and Donaldson were killed gallantly leading their men. By daylight the survivors of the leading companies were back on the road.

Meanwhile the Rifles on the left had been more successful. Protected from flanking fire by the configuration of the ground, they had carried the railway and progressed up the slope beyond it. As soon as he learned of this, Captain Morgan took his company round, reached the railway and attacked it, while Captain Cullen again attacked from the front. This combined movement met with success and by 7 o'clock the position was taken together with 40 prisoners and six machine guns.

There now remained the final objective over the top of the bill. The K.R.R.C. had climbed the slope, and Colonel Pardoe had moved his H.Q. to a quarry above the railway. The German machine gunners on the Montay spur were still pouring in a heavy fire from the right, which our machine guns in support were utterly unable to subdue. The M.G. section which had gone forward with the battalion did gallant work in protecting the right flank, but by now the gun teams had been nearly all killed or wounded.

Lieut. W. Fairlie Alexander, who was now leading A Company, went forward to reconnoitre the only possible line of advance round by the left. But no sooner had the movement started than the whole situation suddenly changed. The 52nd Brigade on the left of the attack had made no progress. The Germans delivered a heavy counter-attack against the exposed left flank of the K.R.R.C., reaching their H.Q. in the quarry where Colonel Pardoe was wounded, and by 9 o'clock the whole battalion was forced to withdraw to the line of the railway.

For an hour the Highlanders and Rifles held this line. C.S.M. C. Coubrough and Sergt. E. McGregor gave valuable assistance in organizing the defence. The position was a most precarious one. Both flanks were in the air, the left of the Fourth Army being behind the Selle about 700 yards away. To make matters worse the enemy's shell fire increased, and his machine guns enfiladed the railway cutting. From these causes casualties continued to mount up, Lieut. A. Hill and Corpl. McArthur, MM, being among the killed.

On the right the Germans in small parties could now be seen crossing the railway with the evident intention of working round behind our positions. Sergt. Ronald McPherson with two Lewis guns succeeded in checking this movement for a time, but the Germans continued to dribble over in spite of his efforts. The Rifles were having the same difficulty on their left flank. The position in fact was untenable, and both units fell back to the road. During the withdrawal Lieut. Fairlie Alexander was killed. His leadership and courage all morning had been splendid.

The position on the road as far as the Rifles were concerned was no better than the railway, and they continued their withdrawal back over the river; all except an officer and about a dozen men who held on our left. By 10.20 a.m. all that remained on the road were these riflemen, about 100 Highlanders, one or two Worcestershires and machine gunners, and a very large number of wounded.

The stretcher bearers had been hard at work all morning carrying back the wounded to the battalion aid post behind a small factory near the foot of the gully, down which the battalion had marched in the early morning. Here our plucky American M.O., Lieut. Hamilton, worked with his devoted assistants. The site was not an ideal one, being constantly under shell-fire; but it was the best obtainable. The stretcher-bearers worked along the route that the battalion had followed in the morning. The Montay-Inchy road was heavily shelled at intervals, but eventually all the stretcher cases were got back. The stretcher-bearers of the 1st South African Scottish, the left-hand unit of the Fourth Army, gave us most generous help in this work.

Meanwhile communication was being kept up through battalion H.Q. at Montay Chateau with Brigade at Rambourlieux Farm, the situation being reported to General Baird by telephone as it changed. The Farm was under heavy shell fire most of the day and the Chateau was also shelled to a lesser extent. The telephone line was cut several times. The early losses among the signallers were now much felt, but those who remained did splendid work repairing the line, Signaller George Mitchell deserving special mention.

The way to the companies, through some orchards, and over the river, was under enemy observation most of the way, and the task of the runners was no light one. As always they all did good service, especially Corpl. Cogan, Pte. John Simpson and Pte. W. Sligsby. During the periods that the telephone line was broken messages to and from Rambourlieux Farm had to be carried. The way was by a more or less sunken road which was constantly under sniping fire; Corpl. Cogan's swerve as he sprinted down it might well have been envied by many a rugby three quarter.

The truth was that the only comparatively safe place in the whole area was the cellar of Montay Chateau. Lieut. J. Bennet, MC, Battalion Lewis Gun Officer, preferred the garret, where, through a skylight, he engaged the enemy machine gunners on Montay Spur. He claimed — with some justification — to have done some execution among the enemy, but he brought retaliation on the Chateau.

In the afternoon orders came in for a fresh attack at 3 o'clock, with the same objective as the morning. This brilliant idea obviously did not emanate either from 100th brigade or 33rd Division; it was a 5th Corps scheme. It was to be preceded by a bombardment of the railway and the slope above. The K.R.R.C. and Worcestershires were to recross the river and attack on our left; beyond them the 17th Division was to make another effort to get forward. The Highlanders were to advance on the right as soon as the main body reached the road. The plan seemed to have little chance of success. Brigadier General Baird and Major General Pinney we believe shared this view.

Later zero hour was postponed till half-past five and the objective limited to the railway; finally the attack was cancelled altogether, and instead we were ordered to withdraw to the line of the river. Positions were to be taken up on the western bank covering the bridges which were also to be protected by posts on the eastern aide.

While the new position was being reconnoitred with a view to effectively covering the crossings and at the same time remaining hidden as far as possible from the high ground over the river, the enemy

put down a gas shell barrage and soon the valley was filled with mustard gas. The concentration was weak, however, and caused little inconvenience. After dark the battalion, fell back, and started digging in, leaving small posts on the road. When the trenches were completed, brushwood was cut from the hedges and trees to camouflage them. We were now in touch with the K.R.R.C. on our left and the 1st South Africans on the right. Lieut. Rowan the quartermaster arrived with rations and water.

During the night and the next day the enemy continued to shell the valley, sometimes with gas, sometimes with H.E., but we suffered only one casualty. The battalion was now so small that it was a poor target.

A man was wounded in one of the forward posts. Stretcher bearers got him back over the river, and up through the orchards to the Montay road. Here they were protected by a high wall, but there was a gap of about fifty yards which the Germans usually kept under machine fire. As the four stretcher—bearers, Privates Hume, Flint, Cameron and Abercrombie passed the gap they continued to walk at their usual steady pace, paying not the least heed to the bullets flying past and knocking up dust round their feet. They got their charge through in safety.

At eight o'clock in the evening the Highlanders were relieved by the 17th Royal Welch Fusiliers, and moved back to Troisvilles. So ended the 100th brigade's attempt to carry the heights beyond the Selle. It had been a costly failure. In it the disadvantages of an attack on a narrow front were accentuated by the nature of the ground. If it served any purpose it proved that the enemy was holding the Selle line in force, and that the correct way to carry it was an attack on a broad front supported by tanks and an adequate weight of artillery fire.

It also proved that machine gun bullets were as deadly in October 1918 as they had been in 1916 and 1917, and that the troops of 1918 were as ready to face them as their predecessors had been. Since joining the 5th Corps the 33rd Division had lost none of its ill-luck. The factor which, more than any other, changed failure in 1916 and 1917 into success in 1918 was the tank. In the Targelle Valley and on the Selle the 100th brigade was ordered to make frontal attacks without the assistance of tanks.

In the Targelle the Highlanders lost fifty per cent, and on the Selle fifty per cent of what was left. The details of the casualties were, killed 5 officers 19 other ranks, wounded 4 officers 126 other ranks, missing (believed killed) 19 other ranks; a total of 173. The proportion of officers killed was unusually high, and bore witness to the gallant manner in which the companies had been led. Lieuts. Baird and Alexander, like Brodie, had come to France in the ranks of A Company. They, as well as Lieuts. Donaldson and Hill, were experienced and extremely popular officers who could ill be spared. The brightest feature of a very sad day was the leadership and initiative shown by the company officers and N.C.O's, among whom Captain J.W.H.B. Morgan had been conspicuous.

Early on the 14th the battalion moved from Troisvilles back to Clary. A woefully small battalion it was, and one which might well have been downhearted; but as the pipers struck up 'The Black Bear' it seemed that the Highlanders were as lighthearted and confident as ever. They had done their best, and what more can one do.

Chapter 23

ENGLEFONTAINE

At Clary the Highlanders enjoyed a good week's rest. Baths for all, and an issue of clean under clothing occupied most of the first day; the second was devoted to paying the troops, overhauling equipment and making good deficiencies. A Battalion Concert was held in the evening.

Major General Sir Reginald Pinney inspected the battalion. His address on this occasion was more than usually impressive — his thanks to the Glasgow Highlanders for the way they had fought in the last two actions, and his congratulations on their courage and endurance were obviously spoken from the bottom of his heart. His deep personal sorrow for the heavy losses which had been incurred was evident. He spoke to a sympathetic audience, because we all knew how his whole Division had suffered in recent weeks.

The training in the few days that followed included a staff ride for officers and a battalion scheme on the ground between Deheries and Clary, over which we had advanced on our way to the River Selle. Each afternoon the pipe band played in the square, which we were told was to be named for all time La Place des Ecossais, in commemoration of the entry of the 5th/6th Scottish Rifles into the village. The week finished with another Battalion Concert on Saturday evening, and on Monday 21st October the Highlanders moved forward to Bertry.

While the 33rd Division had been resting, the 38th had been in the line. On October 17th the Fourth Army had attacked on a ten-mile front south of Le Cateau with five British and two American divisions. After two days very hard fighting, the enemy had been driven back. This was followed by an attack on the 20th on the Selle position north of La Cateau by the Third Army and part of the First. This attack also was on a broad front, eight divisions being employed. Again the enemy put up a stiff resistance, making frequent counter-attacks; but with the assistance of tanks which had been pushed across the Selle our infantry succeeded in taking the high ground beyond the river.

The advance was to be resumed, on the 23rd by the Fourth and Third Armies on a fifteen-mile front. In the 5th Corps the 33rd and 21st Divisions were to go through the 38th and 17th Divisions at 2 a.m. The 33rd Division was ordered to attack in a north-easterly direction on a 2,000 yards front, with Englefontaine at the western corner of the Forest de Mormal as its final objective. The order of advance was the 98th Brigade on the right, the 19th on the left, and the 100th in close support.

The 22nd was very wet; Bertry and its surroundings were a sea of mud. The weather cleared in the evening. At 8 o'clock the Highlanders moved off. Among those who watched the battalion march out of the village to disappear in the darkness was the commanding officer's brother, Lieut. Col. John Menzies, who had commanded in 1916 and 1917.

The way was by Troisvilles, thence past Hambourlieux Farm down tracks into the valley of the Selle. While descending the slope the battalion was shelled, and the valley was full of gas. The going was difficult in the dark owing to the wet state of the ground. After crossing the river the battalion climbed up to its assembly point, the railway cutting in which it had fought a week before.

During the remainder of the night shelling continued, causing twelve casualties. At 2 a.m., zero hour for the 98th and 19th brigades, the enemy's guns shortened range and left the valley in peace. The 1st line transport had moved round by the bridge at Montay, and had come through a stiff barrage there. Among the casualties was the Sergeant cook, who was wounded. The cookers and limbers got through all right, but arrived plastered with mud thrown up by the shells.

The 100th Brigade Transport under our transport officer, Captain McNaughton, assembled on the high ground overlooking Montay, near a German cemetery. This cemetery dated from autumn 1914; half of it being devoted to the Germans, and half to the British who fell at the First Battle of Le Cateau. The two parts were equally carefully laid out, the British graves being as clearly marked with names and regiments as those of the Germans.

The battalion remained at its rendezvous till 6.30 a.m., by which time the progress made by the two leading Brigades permitted a forward move. The Highlanders climbed the steep slope and reaching the top of the ridge, advanced in artillery formation. Near the right boundary of the divisional front ran the

straight Roman road to Englefontaine. Till one reached Forest, the first and largest village on the road, there was about 2,000 yards of very open country. Beyond Forest the road went through enclosed orchard country, while the left remained open as far as Vendegies Wood 5,000 yards further on.

The Highlanders were in the centre with the Worcestershires on their right and the K.R.R.C. on their left; all three battalions being very weak. The enemy was not putting up a very serious resistance and the 19th Brigade made rapid progress. The Highlanders advanced steadily till they reached a point about 1,000 yards beyond Forest, and in line with the little village of Croix. Here the battalion bumped into the left of the 98th Brigade which was being held up in the neighbourhood of Croix.

The 19th Brigade meanwhile continued to make progress, and shortly after midday the Highlanders advanced another 1,000 yards, halting about 500 yards short of Vendegies Wood. By this time the battalion was a long way in advance of the Worcestershires. The 98th Brigade appeared to be held up, partly owing to the difficult country it was fighting in and partly because the 18th Division on its right was still some way behind; accordingly the Worcestershires and Highlanders were ordered to go through and continue the advance. So far the Highlanders had not been in contact with the enemy, but had had a few casualties from shell-fire, particularly when passing Forest.

Although the Worcestershires had not yet come up into line, Colonel Menzies decided to attack in co-operation with the 2nd Argylls, the most advanced troops on the left of the 98th Brigade. At four o'clock the advance was resumed. Moving with the Argylls on their left, the highlanders penetrated Vendegies Wood. The Germans made no attempt to hold, the wood, but immediately our men emerged. from the north-eastern end they came under heavy machine fire. The most serious resistance was coming from the right front, and D, the right front company suffered severely, but Captain Morgan managed to advance about 700 yards beyond the wood and form a defensive flank.

The battalion was now established for the night in a line of posts in touch with the Worcestershires who had come up on the right, and with the 16th K.R.R.C. on the left. In front the Germans were holding out in Paul Jacques Farm on the Roman road and firing from two of the upper windows.

After dark Lieut. J. Bennett, MC, with a few men crawled up a ditch towards the farm, and rushed through the front door. Bennett got in first, shot two Germans who were downstairs, and the machine gunners upstairs surrendered. The result of the day's operations had been an advance of nearly 7,000 yards, and the capture of a large number of prisoners.

The 98th and 19th Brigades passed through next morning to resume the advance. The enemy's resistance was now much more solid, and progress was slow. On the right the 98th Brigade was reported to be held up by a strong force of Germans holding the high ground beyond the Fontaine Lecomte brook and about 700 yards south of Englefontaine. At 10a.m. the Brigade Major brought a verbal order to Colonel Menzies to attack this position from the left — the Worcestershires passing through the 98th Brigade tackling it from the front — and thereafter to push on to the final objective beyond Englefontaine.

The Highlanders advanced about 1,500 yards without meeting serious opposition apart from shell fire, and had turned east to attack when information, was received that the Worcestershires had occupied the position. The battalion then changed front again and resumed its original line of advance towards the final objective Englefontaine-Grand Gay Farm. It was now moving downhill over open country.

About 700 yards in front were the orchards and hedges of the village which the Germans seemed determined to hold. The enclosures formed a semicircle in front, and progress could only be made under heavy covering fire. The forward batteries of the Divisional Artillery, and a company of the 33rd Battalion Machine Gun Corps under Major Louthwaite, gave most valuable assistance. Cooperation between all arms was excellent and was not confined to the ground, for low-flying aeroplanes engaged the Germans with machine guns. The Highlanders soon reached the orchards, but not without heavy loss

Among the killed was Lieut. R.T. Anderson who had been leading B Company. He was a particularly efficient young officer, very much liked by everyone. Only a few days before, he had been awarded a well-merited MC, and had just returned from leave having taken over the Company that morning from Lieut. Bennett. C.S.M. Fletcher now took charge and reorganized and led what remained. of the Company which was put under Captain McKersie's command.

Having reached the enclosed country round the village, the Highlanders continued to press on in a northerly direction, but progress was slow. The Germans' resistance was steady till our men got to close

quarters with them, but they flinched before cold steel. Private Thomas White was the first of his platoon to reach one of the hedges. He burst through a gap and found himself single-handed in front of eight Germans. He tackled them at once and accounted for two with his bayonet; the rest surrendered.

By the afternoon the battalion had established itself facing north-east along the road entering Englefontaine from the west. The situation was obscure. Colonel Menzies got a report that the Cameronians and Scottish Rifles were at the northern exit of the village. This, however, proved to be incorrect.

The position the battalion now occupied was under heavy machine gun fire, and was also being shelled by a battery 2,000 yards away firing over open sights. This battery scored a 'bull's-eye' on battalion H.Q. While the C.O. and the adjutant were standing in front of the house which had been chosen, a shell went through the door and down into the cellar, killing some wounded Germans. The Highlanders were now in touch with the Worcestershires on the right and now the K.R.R.C. on the left; beyond the Rifles was the 64th Brigade.

The battalion was now so reduced in numbers — B Company had been almost wiped out, and there were only about 130 rifles available including H.Q. — that it was decided no further advance could be attempted without artillery support. This was a fortunate decision; there appeared to be some confusion as to the divisional boundary, and the 21st Division put down a barrage on part of our objective. Posts were established on the line that had been reached, and patrols were sent forward to find out if it were practicable to attempt to reach the final objective during the night.

After dark General Baird went round the outpost line of the 100th Brigade. He visited Colonel Menzies who told him where his various posts were. The General had a map on which he had marked the posts of the Rifles on the left. Colonel Menzies told him that the posts were not as far forward as the points indicated. Captain McKersie warned him that he was proposing to go too far forward, but the Brigadier with a K.R.R.C. guide went on. Unfortunately Colonel Menzies' information was correct, and General Baird walked into a German post instead of a British one. The General himself was wounded, fortunately only slightly, but his orderly, Private Peterkin of the Glasgow Highlanders, for whom he had a great regard, was killed. Captain Kingsley, his intelligence officer, was severely wounded.

Although no longer on the move, there was no rest that night for the Highlanders. The opposing posts were so near that it was difficult to distinguish friend from foe. A particularly sharp look-out had to be kept, and there were only too few men available even for this duty. The enemy in Englefontaine were probably more numerous than their assailants, and there was always the possibility of a counter-attack to be considered. Rations and water had to be brought up and distributed. Lieut. Rowan, as always, arrived with his supplies, the water in petrol tins which had to be carefully looked after and collected; the supply being now very limited.

Morning found the Highlanders holding on to the south-western outskirts of Englefontaine. C and A Companies, commanded by Lieut. Houston and McKersie were in front. At the moment no progress could be made. The enemy obviously intended to make every effort to hold the village, and seemed to have plenty of troops available for the purpose. Our men were few and they were nearly exhausted. During the night the posts had been strengthened, and a barricade had been built across the road. All sorts of materials were used: tables, beds, and an assortment of farm implements. The barricade was hastily constructed under the fire of a machine gun about eighty yards away. A useful-looking bed was found in a cellar and was being rapidly carried away when it was found to be occupied by two villagers. The worthy couple took the joke in good part.

A sharp fight was kept up among the orchards, the enemy being just as aggressive as we were. At about ten o'clock in the forenoon, about forty Germans rushed one of our posts. Rifle fire prevented them from getting any further, but when the post was re-established it was found that Lieut. J. R. Paterson and six men were missing.

In the early morning the Divisional and 100th Brigade Staffs had made reconnaissances towards Englefontaine and reported it and the high ground on both flanks strongly held by the enemy. 5th Corps, however, insisted that there was nothing but a weak rear-guard in front and that the advance could be continued without difficulty.

General Pinney ordered a night attack. The 98th and 19th Brigades were to work round the south and north of the village, respectively, and to join hands to the east of it, in order to cut off the retreat of

the garrison. The 100th Brigade was to attack frontally and mop up the village. When Colonel Menzies got the preliminary orders for the attack which was to be carried out by the Worcestershires and Glasgow Highlanders he decided that, owing to the exhausted state of his men, special measures would have to be taken. He formed a special platoon to lead the assault, withdrew the men from the line altogether and put them in cellars to rest. This platoon, which included Battalion H.Q. personnel, he put under the command of Lieut. Bennet with Sergt. Diamond as platoon sergeant.

The withdrawal of these men made it necessary to reinforce the front companies, and D Company (Captain Morgan) and what remained of B took their places in the line alongside C and A.

Zero hour for the 100th Brigade was 1.20a.m. An elaborate barrage programme was arranged. The field guns were to fire shrapnel in order to endanger as little as possible the large number of French civilians who were known to be in the village, and who it was presumed would be occupying the cellars. A battery of heavy trench mortars had come up to augment the fire of the Stokes mortars Colonel Menzies and Major Symonds, commanding the Worcestershires, arranged for close co-operation in the assaults of the two battalions which were to converge on the cross-roads within the village.

The night was noisy. Our guns gave good support to the flanking movements, but at zero hour for the 100th Brigade no news had come in as to what progress had been made by the 4th Kings or the 1st Queens who were leading the attacks of the 98th and 19th Brigades respectively. At 1.20a.m. Bennet led his platoon forward under the artillery and trench mortar barrage. Some shots were fired, but after their rest the men had plenty of go in them and they dashed up the street for the cross-roads where a strong post of Germans with machine guns was already firing at the Worcestershires who were advancing along the road from the south.

Caught between the hammer and the anvil the Germans made a very poor resistance, and those who had time and presence of mind to throw up their hands were taken prisoner. The Worcestershires greeted the Highlanders with a cheer. The perfect timing of the operation gave both units confidence in each other, and they proceeded enthusiastically to their task of mopping up the village. Once the way was clear the other companies followed Bennet's Platoon and took their part in rounding up the Germans.

Englefontaine, as it was now proved, was not being held by a weak rearguard. The Germans, far from having any idea of evacuating the village, were actually in process of carrying out a relief when the attack took place, their 14th Division taking over from their 58th. This, by causing some confusion and disorganization to the defence, probably favoured us even if it did double the garrison. The village was full of Germans and one of the difficulties which faced our troops was that of looking after the prisoners. Once the village was entered the German resistance gave way rapidly. A very large number were killed, both in the streets and in the houses where they had taken refuge. In places the Germans rallied and even attempted to counter-attack.

Two posts held out strenuously in an orchard on the left, but Captain Morgan in co-operation with the K.R.R.C. cleared them. The recent heavy losses that they had suffered did not perhaps tend to make the Highlanders more merciful. The village was quickly mopped up, Sergt. Diamond personally accounting for a large number of the enemy. By two o'clock the final objective was reached. C Company dug in at the north-eastern end of the village just south of the Roman road, with D and A Companies on its right. Contact was made with the Worcestershires on the right and the Queens on the left.

The line was now facing east on the verge of the Forest de Mormal. At 5.30 a.m. the Queens were relieved by the K.R.R.C. and shortly afterwards the enemy counter-attacked on the left, but was repulsed. by daylight the position was secure and patrols which had been sent out reported that the enemy had retired.

The operations of the 33rd Division had been completely successful and the Germans had been finally expelled from Englefontaine and driven into the forest. The Division took over 500 prisoners, the Highlanders' quota being reported as 78, but the nature of the operation and the close co-operation involved in the rounding up made it difficult to say to which unit many of the prisoners should be ascribed; nor did it matter. After the action a Worcestershire officer told the C.O. that he had asked a Glasgow Highlander N.C.O. how many prisoners he had taken and got the reply "Prisoners? None, my ammunition's no done yet"

The scene in the village when the natives emerged from their hiding places was extraordinary. They had come through a fiery ordeal, their houses were very badly knocked about, much of their property was

destroyed, but they were full of joy at being free and their excitement was intense. The Mayor made a round of official visits starting with A Company H,Q., mistaking Captain McKersie for the commander of the troops. Coffee, apples and cognac — there was as yet no A.P.M. in the village — were lavished on the troops. A certain amount of enemy shelling interfered with the rejoicing, but apart from this the day passed peacefully, and at six o'clock in the evening the Highlanders were relieved by D company of the 2nd Royal Welch Fusiliers and marched back to billets in Forest.

The advance of seven miles from the Selle to beyond Englefontaine had taken four days and had involved heavy fighting. Probably no unit in the division was more continually in action than the Glasgow Highlanders, who had first got to close quarters with the enemy in the afternoon of the 23rd, had been in the front line day and night since, except during the morning of the 24th, and had taken part in the final frontal attack on the village.

In proportion to the strength of the battalion the casualties were heavy, 84 all told; but judged by the results achieved they could not be regarded as excessive; considering that about as many prisoners were taken, and that one way or another the battalion must have put out of action a number of Germans exceeding its own strength. One officer was killed, one wounded, and one missing; 12 other ranks were killed, 66 wounded, and 3 missing.

There had been many individual acts of gallantry, some of which would be rewarded in due course. The work of the Division since joining the 5th Corps was recognized in an appropriately-worded message to the G.O.C.

Chapter 24

THE FOREST OF MORMAL

The Highlanders rested in Forest for eight days. The arrival of a draft of 34 men went only a small way towards making up the Englefontaine losses, but the reinforcement made up in quality what it lacked in quantity, consisting as it did of H.L.I. men (including a few Glasgow Highlanders) all of whom had already served in France. The battalion was reorganized; B Company could only produce one platoon and the others two each.

In contrast with Clary, Forest bore ample evidence of recent fighting, many of the houses being rather badly smashed, but our quarters were infinitely better than the dug-outs at Villers-Guislain. The battalion spent a whole day in clearing part of the battlefield, collecting machine guns, trench mortars, rifles and other material; great quantities of which the enemy had abandoned.

The battle of the Selle had resulted in an advance of a maximum depth of eight miles on a twenty-four mile front from the junction with the French to Valenciennes, exclusive. Twenty-four British and two American divisions had taken 20,000 prisoners and 475 guns from thirty-one German divisions.

Since August 8th the British Fourth and Third Armies had advanced fifty miles against a much stronger concentration of the enemy than was to be found on any other part of the front. These two armies had done the heaviest, most continuous and most successful fighting.

On the Flanders front the main advance and the Ypres offensive had forced the enemy to abandon vast tracks of country. Lille had fallen, our troops had reached Tournai, and the Germans had lost the whole of the Belgian Coast.

Our Allies had added their contribution. In the south the Americans, after their successful 'take over' of the St. Mihiel salient had gained at heavy cost some fifteen miles on the Meuse, while in the centre the French main group of armies had advanced about twenty-three.

On October 31st the following wire was received from 100th brigade:

'Corps wires 1300 hours states satisfactory armistice signed with Turkey to take effect from 12 noon Italian battle going very satisfactory prisoners 33000 aaa added all concerned.'

If the grammar was not unimpeachable, the news was sufficiently momentous to excuse the lapse on the part, presumably, of the signaller concerned.

This was followed next day by another wire:

'An armistice has been signed by Austria with Italy.'

The newspapers were full of reports that the Germans were negotiating for an armistice themselves. This seemed to be the only course open to them, but one wondered if, after all, they were only trying to gain time to disengage themselves from our pursuit, and in the event of this being so, if there was still sufficient force of men and material behind the British punch to defeat them, supposing that they stood firmly on the defensive or even counter-attacked.

Speculation as to whether the war would end in a week or a month or a year was futile; our business was to prepare for the next advance. A fresh supply of maps showing the country in front was issued, and these were eagerly examined. Looming large before us was the great Forêt de Mormal — ten miles from north to south and about seven from west to east, it presented a pretty problem for the higher command. Would it be attacked, or 'pinched out'? The north-easterly line of advance of the 5th Corps, if continued, would take us along the north-western edge of the forest, where the Roman road lay. To the east of the forest the Sambre, a broad deep river, formed another very serious obstacle.

As always, training was adapted to the requirements of the immediate future, and a day was spent in Vendegies Wood practising tactical work among the trees. The wood however, was in the 38th Division's area and most of the close country scheme had to be carried out among the orchards surrounding the village. During the week the Brigade was inspected. General Baird gave us an inspiring address, and the Corps Commander accompanied by General Pinney came on parade and presented medal ribbons. General Chute thanked the 100th Brigade for its good work since joining the 5th Corps, advised us to practise wood fighting, and repeated the current opinion that the only nice German was a dead one. The proceedings concluded with a march past in column. On Monday 4th November our rest came to an end.

Since the 33rd Division had handed over to the 38th eight days before, no forward move had been made on our immediate front, and the line remained practically in the same position as when we had left it. On the left the First Army had taken Valenciennes and along with the left of the Third Army had come up into line.

At dawn on 4th November the Battle of the Sambre began with an attack on a thirty-mile front by the Fourth, Third and First Armies, with co-operation by the French on the right. The advance was to be made due east instead of north-east as hitherto, and this change gave to the 5th Corps the task of going right through the centre and broadest part of the forest. It also gave to us as part of our objective the railway junction Aulnoye beyond the Sambre; the most vital spot in the enemy's line of communication.

The 38th and 17th Divisions attacked at dawn with the 33rd and 21st in support. The objective of the 38th was a line drawn through les Grande Patures, a hamlet in the centre of the forest. The method of advance was to be a series of diagonal pushes with the aim of 'pinching out' certain areas and leaving them to be mopped up later; the divisional frontage was 2,200 yards.

It was intended that the 33rd Division would go through the 38th at dawn on the 5th, clear the eastern half of the forest, push out into the more open country, cross the Sambre and establish itself on the high ground beyond. The 100th Brigade would be leading, its task to secure the line of the eastern edge of the forest and push out patrols towards the Sambre. The 98th Brigade was then to go through, cross the river and make good the high ground on the farther bank. Lastly the 19th Brigade was to pass through the 98th and continue the advance. The scope of this scheme gives some idea of the measure our higher command had taken of the Germans.

General Baird allotted objectives to his battalions. The 2nd Worcestershires, much the strongest unit of his brigade, had the duty of going through at dawn and securing the line of the Route de Sassegny, a road running from north-west to south-east about 1,500 yards beyond the final objective of the 38th Division. The Glasgow Highlanders and 16th K.R.R.C. were then to go through, the former on the right, and advance about 3,000 yards to the eastern edge of the forest. Detailed orders were issued down to companies before we started, and explained to officers, N.C.O's and men.

The battalion moved out of Forest by the Englefontaine road at 11 o'clock in the forenoon. As soon as the column was clear of the village it left the road and took to cross-country tracks to the right of it, with the double purpose of avoiding any shelling along the road, and leaving it free for transport. Colonel Menzies had been detailed to attend a senior officers' machine gun course and the Highlanders were under the command of Major A. K. Reid. Heavy shelling on the right and in front showed that the battle was well under way.

Keeping to the right of Paul Jacques Farm the battalion continued its march parallel to the Englefontaine road till it reached a point due west of Hecq, a village on the verge of the forest one mile south-east of Englefontaine. Hecq, which had been held by the enemy before the attack, was our immediate destination. We were now within the zone of the enemy's shelling and near enough the battle to be able to distinguish the sound of small arms fire.

No news of any kind had come our way, but recently evacuated battery positions indicated that sufficient progress had been made to allow our guns to move forward.

It was intended that the Brigade would remain at Hecq during the afternoon and resume its march in the evening, but before reaching the village the Brigade halted. Captain J. A. Cowie had ridden forward accompanied by cyclist orderlies to reconnoitre the village and find accommodation for the battalion. At Kemmel in November 1914 he had been the first Glasgow Highlander to be wounded, He had been wounded again at High Wood, and had only rejoined. He nearly added the distinction of being the last officer to be hit, for no sooner had he entered the village than his party came under a burst of machine gun fire at close range.

This unexpected hitch in the billeting arrangements was soon explained by a hot and bothered Tank Corps officer. It appeared that although the village had been taken hours ago, a party of machine gunners still held out in a house not fifty yards away. He had moved up his tank, the tank had broken down, and could now be seen in the narrow street being subjected to an incessant patter of machine gun bullets. Sheltering behind the tank was the crew, smoking cigarettes.

The situation at Hecq was cleared up before the arrival of the battalion. The transport which had travelled by road was not far behind, and before long dinners were issued. News from the front was still

scanty, but we gathered that the battle was going well. A large number of prisoners were busily engaged carrying back wounded.

In the afternoon a conference was held at Brigade H.Q., when General Baird issued orders for the advance to be continued in the evening. Information available confirmed the scraps of news which we had heard. The 38th Division had been most successful in its attack and had got well on towards its final objective, if indeed it had not already reached it. The troops on both flanks were also pushing on, the Fourth Army on the right having crossed the Sambre.

After tea the battalion moved off from Hecq and re-entered the forest by the Route d'Hecq just as night was falling. This road runs in a perfectly straight line to the heart of the forest at Las Grandes Patures. The Worcestershires were still leading the Brigade, which after following the road for about a mile turned left and took to a track towards the north. Here the going was difficult, the surface being very rough and the way strewn with tree stumps and fallen branches. A most arduous half-mile brought us to our halting place for the night. The Brigade was now well clear of the main road, and from the area most likely to be subjected to enemy shelling, it was feared that the Germans might drench parts of the forest with gas.

The night was still and cold, overhead there was a beautiful starry sky, but under the trees it was very dark. The men disappeared in the undergrowth as they lay down to rest for a few hours, and one wondered if, even after taking care to keep companies together, it would be possible to get away while it was still dark without leaving someone behind. From time to time bursts of shelling could be heard, chiefly from the direction of the Route d'Hecq, but none came near our hiding place. Overhead aeroplanes hummed. If they were enemy 'planes sent to bomb us or to direct artillery fire on us, they got no satisfaction, because strict orders had been given that no lights were to be shown.

Messages and orders had to be read and written, so as soon as the battalion halted Pioneer Sergeant Hosie and his ever-resourceful retainers set to work to dig a hole in the ground. Here, under waterproof sheets and in a space about the size of an average dog-kennel, but with lees head-room, battalion headquarters was installed. General Baird occupied a similar establishment not far away.

The Brigade occupied a very small area, but it was a very small brigade. The troops were very quiet on this eve of action. They could not be sure that it was their last action, but they were full of optimism. The rapid success of the attack on the forest and good news from other parts of the battlefield gave them solid reason to hope that the end of the war was near.

The Glasgow Highlanders had spent this very night exactly four years before in the good ship 'Novia' crossing the Channel. Few were present who had landed with the battalion, fewer still, who had served with it during the whole period.

In the small hours of the morning General Baird summoned battalion commanders to a conference. He had definite information that the 38th Division had secured its objective. The 13th Royal Welch Fusiliers had been ordered to send out two companies, one to Sarbaras at the eastern edge of the forest and one to la Tete Noire, another village further north. It was believed that the enemy were retiring rapidly, and the 100th Brigade was to go after them at once and not to wait till dawn. The order of march was changed. The Glasgow Highlanders were to lead the Brigade, pass through the 38th Division, take the road running east towards la Tete Noire for a mile, then turn south-east for Sarbaras and advance from there to the high ground overlooking the Sambre. The K.R.R.C. following would advance to the Sambre through la Tete Noire, and the Worcestershires would be in reserve.

Shortly after three o'clock the battalion moved off, and three-quarters of an hour's marching brought the head of the column to les Grandes Patures. Here we found that no information had so far come back from the two advanced companies. After a short halt we moved on, taking the road leading north-east. B Company which consisted of one platoon under Lieut. A. R. Lamberton acted as advance guard. It could no more than protect the column from surprise by enemy posts which might be on the road itself. Thick undergrowth and ditches made it out of the question to send patrols through the trees on each side of the road, for time was the important factor.

It had been impressed on us that "present conditions justified the taking of risks which would have been criminal a few months before" so our flanks had to take their chance, and the battalion, just six platoons, marched on through the darkness about a hundred yards behind the advanced guard.

A mile beyond les Grandes Patures we struck the road leading east to la Tete Noire. Dawn was now

beginning to break, and as it grew lighter the advanced guard was allowed to increase its distance. So far the march had been uneventful, but about a mile short of Sarbaras just as the 'point' of the advanced guard topped a rise, four Germans were seen at a cross-roads about 300 yards in front. Lamberton sent a section forward on each side of the road to round them up, but the Germans had already taken alarm and escaped.

No sooner had the march been resumed than about thirty more of the enemy were seen. They were coming from the right where the trees were very thin, advancing in open order — or rather, retiring, for they were going east — and when first sighted would be about six hundred yards away. The advanced guard immediately took up a position to ambush them. The enemy disappeared into a hollow, but did not come out of it; again we must have been seen. It was presumed that they had escaped to the south where the trees were very thick.

No time could be spent chasing odd parties of Germans through the forest, so leaving B Company to watch the right flank the battalion turned east towards Sarbaras, Captain McKersie with A Company taking over the duty of advance guard.

As the column was entering the village an aeroplane flying high dropped two bombs which fell by the side of the road. There was only one casualty but a particularly regrettable one. One of the grooms, Private Anderson, who had come to France with the battalion and served with it ever since, was killed.

The advanced company of the 13th Royal Welch Fusiliers was found in occupation of Sarbaras and reported that the other company held la Tete Noire. The most notable incident in Sarbaras was an assault on the Brigade Major who arrived in the village while the battalion was passing through. A number of the more attractive part of the population surrounded him and kissed him. The Highlanders unfortunately had an objective further forward, so Captain McKersie had perforce to pass through the village without tarrying, and march on towards the river.

It was now necessary to pay some attention to our flanks, and patrols were accordingly sent out. One of these on the right under Corporal E. Youngman ambushed and captured two prisoners on the Sarbaras-Sassegnies road. They proved to be a battery commander and his orderly, both were exceptionally well mounted and their fresh horses were very useful, as some of ours were thoroughly jaded after their long walk through the forest.

The officer, who spoke good English having been in the steel trade in Sheffield, appeared to have grave doubts about how we dealt with prisoners — the Germans, he said, treated them well — and he seemed to think that his unfortunate groom was in special danger of being murdered. Considering that he had lived in England he might have known better, but perhaps it was the kilt that put the fear of death on him, and his apprehension might be regarded as a subconscious compliment. He was inclined to be bitter on the subject of the present conduct of the German infantry and gave us one interesting bit of information, that about a hundred of them were on our side of the river at Sassegnies, but that they were not likely to bother us!

Before 10 o'clock in the forenoon A Company reached our objective, the high ground overlooking the river. Captain Morgan with D Company moved up on the right and Lieut. A. J. Walker with C Company on the left. Contact was now established with the K.R.R.C. at the south end of Berlaimont. Our left was therefore secure, but the right flank was open. C Company was accordingly moved round to a position echeloned in rear of D Company pending the arrival of the Worcestershires who were moving on Sassegnies, and B Company in reserve guarded the Sarbaras-Sassegnies road; Battalion H.Q. being 500 yards farther back at the junction of that road with the road to Berlaimont. The frontage held was about 1,000 yards and the depth rather more. The forward companies were about 500 yards from the river, on the opposite bank of which was an embankment occupied by the enemy. It was considered that nothing would be gained by pushing, our posts downhill nearer the river; such a move could not have been carried out by daylight unobserved, and the enemy was better left in ignorance of our strength and dispositions.

Patrols however, were sent out and they reported the intervening ground clear. On the right a few Germans were seen round Sassegnies, but none of our patrols managed to catch them. Meanwhile two eighteen pounders and some machine guns had come up and these dispersed a German working party beyond the river.

No further move was made during the day. The enemy seemed still to have plenty of guns and ammunition, for he plastered the whole area liberally, but it was quite evident that he had no idea where

we were and was shooting at random. During the afternoon the Worcestershires occupied Sassegnyes, and in the evening the 98th Brigade relieved the K.R.R.C. who went into reserve at Sarbaras. After dark C Company moved forward and took up a position near the railway embankment east of Sassegnyes in close touch with the forward companies of the Worcestershires.

The long day's operations had been completely successful. The British line had been advanced five miles and the forest was now behind it. By the route they had taken the Highlanders had marched double that distance, and taking into account movements into positions, patrolling and message carrying, most of them a good many miles more. There now remained the second obstacle, and orders for the crossing were issued in the evening.

Chapter 25

THE SAMBRE

The Fourth Army on our right had crossed the river further south on the 4th. During the 5th it had made progress, but was scarcely so far forward as we were. The two Corps on the right of the Third Army had indeed advanced farther than any of the others, the whole of Mormal Forest having been taken. The Sambre was a broad deep river with low but steep banks in front of the 5th Corps there were two railway bridges carrying the lines converging on Aulnoye Junction, one in front of the 100th Brigade and one at Berlaimont, but both had been blown up. At Berlaimont there was also a main road bridge, a smaller bridge and a lock. The Germans had also destroyed these, but during the night Sergeant George S. Steward, MM, took out a patrol and found a practicable crossing for infantry.

The 33rd Division was ordered to cross the river before dawn on the 6th, the 100th Brigade on the right by a barrel bridge which was to be constructed by the R.E. about 50 yards north of the broken railway bridge, and the 98th brigade at Berlaimont.

The 100th Brigade operation orders were received at 2.30 a.m. The objectives were the villages of Leval and Petit Maubeuge. The 2nd Worcestershires were to cross first, closely followed by the Glasgow Highlanders who would deploy and advance on their left. Lastly the K.R.R.C. would cross and move to the right to guard that flank.

During the night the two battalions moved into the low ground near the crossing place. Except for one or two shells and a few trench mortar bombs, the construction of the bridge was unhindered. The enemy expended plenty of ammunition, but strangely enough his fire was nearly all directed on the high ground behind. The bridge was finished in good time, and the Worcestershires filed across. There was

some shelling and a certain amount of distant small arms fire, but only one casualty resulted; a man killed. As the Highlanders waited their turn some shells came fairly near, but not near enough to do any damage. There was also a certain amount of machine gun fire, which for the moment was harmless but might become deadly in daylight.

The Worcestershires seemed to be taking a long time to get over the bridge, and already the grey of dawn was stealing over the landscape. At 5.30 a.m. the Highlanders crossed. Lieut. A. J. Walker advanced with C Company next the Worcestershires, Captain McKersie brought A Company up on Walker's left, Captain Morgan following with D and B Companies. The advance at first was north-east, with the right on the railway, and then east towards Petit Maubeuge.

The leading companies had little difficulty in getting forward and reached the village with the loss of only one or two men wounded. A few prisoners were taken, but prisoners were now very difficult to get, the Germans not being in a very heroic mood.

Passing over the network of railways which formed the junction, and through Petit Maubeuge, Walker and McKersie soon reached their objective and at 7.55 a.m. reported that they had established themselves 500 yards up the slope beyond the village. Here they were in touch with the Worcestershires on the right and the 2nd Argylls on the left, for the 98th Brigade had also got across the river, although not quite as easily as the 100th.

The Worcestershires had taken Leval and the K.R.R.C. coming up on their right had formed a flank resting on the river, the Fourth Army not having yet come up. The 33rd Division had now reached a line about 2,000 yards east of the river, and had delivered another batch of villages out of the hands of the Germans.

The Highlanders arrived in Petit Maubeuge well in advance of the Brigade Major, but as at Sarbaras, they had to pass straight through and take up a line on their objective about 500 yards beyond the village. Battalion H.Q., however, which came up later was established in the village, and received a very warm welcome. The villagers here appeared to be more than usually bitter against the Germans. Aulnoye being an important link in the enemy's line of communication, the inhabitants would naturally come in contact with a large number of the baser sort of Boche. They told us many tales of German 'Kultur'; of how on the first advance through the village, the officers had bragged that they would be dancing in Paris within a month — and they probably would have been, if it had not been for the B. E. F.

Another item of information was that the previous summer our aeroplanes had bombed the junction, got direct hits on a train full of ammunition, exploded and destroyed it; along with a leave train that was lying beside it, thus accounting for about a thousand Germans. Some houses had been wrecked but no local inhabitants killed. They had not suffered from our fire during the advance, our guns having used only shrapnel over the village — and not much of that, for the simple reason that we had outstripped our ammunition supply.

The Germans had been very thorough in their demolitions. In addition to blowing up the railway bridges, they had torn up parts of the tracks in many places, and most of the road junctions had been mined. The crossroads in Petit Maubeuge were now a great crater.

The crossings and loop lines of the junction were now behind us. Along the line leading north-east to Mons and the main line of communication to Germany through Liege, the enemy had constructed miles of sidings. north-west the railway to Flanders, south-west lay the line to the battlefields of the Somme, and south-east was the way to Hirson and the French front; we were in fact sitting on one of the enemy's nerve centres.

During the forenoon he continued to shell the village and kept our posts under trench mortar fire, showing that he was not far away; but little damage was done. It is true that a bomb landed on the dinner table of A Company Officers' Mess, but everyone had taken shelter when the shooting started — the bully beef was lost and the house was wrecked, but Captain McKersie and his officers were none the worse.

During the afternoon the 19th brigade continued the advance. The 5th/6th Scottish rifles passed through our front. They moved up from the river in artillery formation, advancing steadily under shell fire; as far as we could see, without loss. They passed beyond our posts and soon disappeared from view.

General Baird having informed us that the brigade would probably not be required to move till next morning, preparations were made for a good night's rest. The first night of the advance had been spent

going through the forest, the second on the banks of the Sambre, and now all ranks required sleep more than anything else. Posts were left on the roads while the battalion slept.

Next morning, after a good breakfast — rations, more important than a superfluity of ammunition, were always up in time — the battalion paraded at 7.30 and moved off at 7.35. The 33rd Division was on the move again. The 19th Brigade was leading, followed by the 98th and 100th Brigades. Once more the Glasgow Highlanders marched at the head of the brigade, followed by the Worcestershires and K.R.R.C.

Before we had got very far a halt was called. We moved off the road and waited. Our only amusement was to watch the shelling by the enemy of some of his own evacuated dug-outs, about two hundred yards away. It transpired that the 19th Brigade had been held up in Ecquelin, a village about four miles in front of the Sombre.

After midday a Brigade conference was held. The situation in front was that the 19th Brigade had attacked and captured Ecquelin. For the moment it was not able to advance any farther — or at any rate it was not thought advisable to send it on — and the 98th Brigade was to go through and continue the advance.

Beyond Ecquelin the principal topographical feature on our front was a large semicircular strip of wood averaging about half-a-mile in width. The base of this curve was about four miles in length and rested on our southern divisional boundary; the top almost reached our northern boundary. The main road between Maubeuge and Avesnes lying north and south divided the curved wood into two roughly equal parts. The only good road going in an easterly direction went through the western end of the strip of wood, a short distance beyond Pot de Vin, a small village on our southern boundary and almost due south of Ecquelin. This road inclined towards the south, and after crossing the strip of wood, at Pot de Vin, led to Dourlers outside our area.

The Brigadier explained that the 98th Brigade was taking over the whole divisional front and would continue the advance with the Maubeuge-Avesnes road as its first objective. After reaching the road it was to confine its attention to the southern half of the front and advance through the village of Floursies, penetrate the Bois de Beugnies — as the far end of the strip of wood was named — and establish an outpost line beyond.

The 100th Brigade was to follow the 98th, and when the first objective was secured, it was to take over the left half of the divisional front, advance and establish an outpost line beyond the wood alongside the 98th. The intention was that this line should be reached before dark.

The order of march for the 100th Brigade remained Glasgow Highlanders, Worcestershires, K.R.R.C. General Baird's orders were that the march would be continued, the leading battalion, to keep in touch as it had done in the morning. When the Maubeuge-Avesnes road was taken by the 98th Brigade, the Highlanders and Worcestershires were to continue the advance to the final objective on the left, the K.R.R.C. being kept in reserve.

The Highlanders were on the move again by 2.30 p.m., but there were frequent halts; evidently the troops in front had been checked. About four o'clock the head of the column reached Pot de Vin and made a detour through orchards and woods to avoid the village which was being very heavily shelled. As it was, the battalion went through the fringe of the barrage but without loss; in this we were fortunate, for we passed several dead and wounded men of the 98th Brigade.

As the enemy's fire seemed to be concentrated on the village and its immediate surroundings, the battalion pressed forward and closed the gap between itself and the rear of the Middlesex. Major Reid got in touch with the headquarters of the three battalions in front, and ascertained the plan of attack. The 4th Kings had been allotted the first objective, the Maubeuge-Avesnes road; behind, them were the 2nd. Argylls with Floursies as their objective, and following them came the Middlesex with orders to secure the final objective, the far aide of the wood.

At 4 p.m. the latest information available was that the Kings had not reached the first objective, the leading company having been held up at 3 p.m. by machine gun fire coming chiefly from the left. It also appeared that the Kings were concentrating their efforts on the right half of the objective.

This information was not very satisfactory from our point of view. Fortunately General Baird arrived on the scene shortly after four o'clock. When the situation had been reported to him, he ordered the advance to be continued. He had previously indicated the route to be used for the advance to the jumping-off place. It was along the southern edge of the semicircular wood.

At twenty minutes past four the Highlanders moved off into the blue. The wood on the left had not been reconnoitred and might be full of Boche. A patrol under 2nd Lieutenant Forbes was sent through it. It was recognized that it would be impossible for him to keep in touch with the battalion, but his presence was at least some protection against surprise. The clean-cut line of the edge of the wood looked very suitable on the map as a line of advance, but in actual fact it was a matter of the utmost difficulty in the gathering darkness to make out where that line really lay; the trees of the wood merging into the trees and high hedges surrounding the fields.

It was necessary to have the pioneers at the head of the battalion to cut gaps in these hedges, most of which consisted of thick old trees. After the pioneers came Captain Morgan with D Company. Although the advance was necessarily slow, it was difficult to keep in touch, as the column wound in and out, taking advantage of the line of least resistance, and at the same time maintaining its correct direction.

It became quite dark before the battalion had progressed very far, and at the same time the line of advance came under a machine gun barrage crossing from the front. The long columns, for the battalion was now in single file, and very vulnerable, but our luck held, and only two men were wounded.

At 6 p.m. the head of the column reached the Maubeuge-Avesnes road. The machine guns were still giving bursts of fire, and in addition to those in front, which appeared to be not far off, others were shooting along the road from both flanks; some trench mortar bombs were also coming over. The situation was obscure to say the least of it. The latest information from the 98th brigade was negative; all that was known was that its advance had been held up at three o'clock in the afternoon. It was true that the enemy were on the run, but machine guns can do a great deal of damage in a very few minutes.

A small house stood at the point where the road entered the wood. Captain Morgan's Company took cover in and round the house, and as the other companies came up they were put into a comparatively dry ditch along the road, the movement being completed without further loss. The Worcestershires came up and Major Symonds agreed with Major Reid that a halt would have to be called till the positions of both the enemy and the 98th brigade became clearer. The Worcestershires, accordingly took cover on the right of the Highlanders, and both battalions established their headquarters in the house.

Patrols were sent out to both flanks, that on the right being found by the Worcestershires with instructions to get in touch with the 98th Brigade. A message was sent back to General Baird reporting the situation and the action taken. By eight o'clock the patrols had returned. The information was largely negative. No troops of the 98th Brigade had been found, but the patrol had got in touch with a unit of the 50th Division of the Fourth Army on the Avesnes-Maubeuge road south of our area.

Meanwhile the enemy's fire had continued without doing any damage. It now slackened off and then ceased. The enemy had probably retired and doubtless the advance could be resumed, but as the reply from brigade H.Q. was expected any moment, it was considered advisable to wait for it.

An officer belonging to the 98th Brigade who had got lost was brought in; he reported that the leading company of his brigade had not yet reached the Maubeuge-Avesnes road. This information may or may not have been correct, but as far as it went it confirmed the results of our own reconnaissances, and made it appear inadvisable to push on without further information or orders.

At length the 100th Brigade Intelligence Officer arrived with definite instructions, he accounted for the delay in his arrival by saying that he had had the greatest difficulty in finding the battalion. This illustrates the nature of the ground, because the Highlanders and Worcestershires were in position on the edge of the wood in the exact line of advance as ordered, and on a well-defined road.

The message he carried made the subsequent operations easy; the 58th Division was now advancing with orders to go through the 33rd and continue the pursuit. The 100th Brigade had been ordered to withdraw from its position, and to move back to Petit Maubeuge. We were not to wait for the Welshmen whose route was the main road on our right.

Shortly after one o'clock on the morning of 8th November the Highlanders filed out of their positions and started to thread their way back through the hedges to Pot de Vin, then along the road to billets in Petit Maubeuge. The position they evacuated was almost exactly due south of Mons, and about eighteen miles from that historic town.

The 33rd Division had finished its operation. In three days it had advanced from the centre of the Forest de Mormal, crossed the Sambre and moved forward six miles beyond, a distance of eleven miles in all,

A most satisfactory feature of the operation was its small cost, The 100th Brigade had met with less serious opposition than either the 19th or 98th, but the Germans were never far away, and the light casualty list may well be ascribed to the good leadership of the company officers and N.C.O's.

Chapter 26

THE ARMISTICE AND AFTER

While the 38th Division continued the pursuit, advancing eastwards in the tracks of an enemy who had virtually disappeared, the 33rd Division had drawn back to the valley of the Sambre. At Petit Maubeuge the Glasgow Highlanders rested and cleaned up.

It was officially confirmed that the enemy had sent over plenipotentiaries to Marshall Foch, pleading for an armistice. To this Foch had agreed, but under very severe conditions: the Germans were told to accept by noon (their time) on the 11th or continue fighting. The Glasgow Highlanders got on with their cleaning and refitting.

During the night news came that the enemy had accepted the terms, the Kaiser had fled to Holland, and that fighting would cease at 11 a.m. on the 11th. Probably only those who had experienced the terrible strain and constant fighting of these last three months, with the loss of so many comrades, can realize what a great relief it was to all.

There was no undue excitement during the day — we were still relaxing — just steady drill, with the subalterns under the adjutant, and other ranks under the R.S.M. But a battalion parade was held at 11 a.m. just to mark the end. The Commanding Officer congratulated all ranks on their constant cheerfulness, courage and fighting qualities during these last few months — as indeed throughout the whole campaign. And he urged them to maintain these fine soldierly qualities in the possibly difficult times ahead, while waiting patiently for demobilization.

After dark, however, everyone was full of joy. The vigorous dancing of reels to the music of the pipes certainly cheered up the villagers. Bonfires were lit, Very lights fired off indiscriminately and generally it was a very happy, though noisy, evening. The General and his staff came along to dine at H.Q. Mess; later still an invasion of company officers livened up the proceedings even more.

Next day the battalion moved to billets in Berlaimont. There the making up of deficiencies in clothing and equipment continued, before they moved to Englefontaine, and again, to Clary.

At Clary for the first few days the companies were at the disposal of the Company Commanders, followed by a battalion parade and Thanksgiving Service on the Friday, and a route march on the Saturday. Two days were spent salvaging in the area, and at the end of the second week there was a ceremonial parade.

St. Andrew's Night was celebrated in proper Scottish fashion; 'luxuries' were difficult to obtain, but fortunately the Q.M.C. at Division was himself a Scot — a Cameron Highlander — and he saw to it that we were not disappointed.

On the 9th December the 100th Brigade commenced a long trek westwards. With roughly fifty miles of devastation to be traversed, the first four days were not pleasant, marching through it with stops overnight at Masnieres,, Hermies and Favreuil (north of Bapaume), then along the main Bapaume-Albert road to a camp west of Albert.

Thereafter the route — to Allonville, Ailly-sur-Somme, Fourdrinoy and Aumatre — lay through delightful country, quite unspoiled by war. The journey was made in easy stages of about twelve and a half miles a day, and everywhere we got the most boisterous welcome — sometimes quite embarrassing, with garlands of flowers, and fond embraces — and always the best billets the villagers had to offer. Bandsmen and pipers were in constant demand, and played their part well.

Aumatre is about 24 miles west of Amiens. On arrival there the battalion spent the next few days resting and cleaning equipment and the billets. Christmas Dinner was enjoyed at the various billets, and the Commanding Officer visited all the Companies in turn.

When it was realized that we were to be retained in France for further duties, a party had been sent home for the Colours. These had been handed back by the Lord Provost — Mr. I. W. Stewart — at a ceremony in front of the City Chambers on the 19th December. On the last day of 1918 the battalion marched to Oisement to receive the Colours at a special parade there. The ceremony was watched with great interest by a large number of the local inhabitants. When the battalion returned to Aumatre the Colours were placed in H.Q. Mess.

The Sergeants' Dinner — to which all officers were invited — was a great success, and in due course the New Year was celebrated according to custom.

Early in January the Battalion moved to Londinieres, stayed there overnight, then continued by march route to the outskirts of Dieppe, where good quarters were awaiting us at Rouxmeanil Camp.

At this Base there was a state of unrest among troops clamouring to be demobilized, and we were assigned the duties of disciplinary battalion. Fortunately the Military Police, reinforced by Scotland Yard experts, kept the situation well in hand and we were never called upon for what might have been very unpleasant duties.

Our only duty was to keep fit, so the time was spent playing football and other games, with some physical training and a little close order drill.

The battalion marched to Dieppe on the afternoon of 27th January. The battalion was formed up in line on the Esplanade opposite the Grand Hotel. There was a large turnout of spectators. The Divisional Commander inspected the battalion, and presented medal ribbons; the Highlanders then marched past by companies. After reforming, the battalion advanced in review order, after which Sir Reginald Pinney addressed the battalion.

He thanked all ranks for the splendid way they had turned out and also remarked how proud he was to have had such a splendid battalion in his division; he was quite sure that no battalion in the army had done better work than the Glasgow Highlanders. He deeply regretted that this would be the last opportunity he would have of seeing the men on parade as a battalion, but he looked forward to the day when he could come to Glasgow and meet them once more.

Led by the Commanding Officer, the battalion gave the Divisional Commander three hearty cheers. The friendly atmosphere that had existed among all the units of the 33rd Division was largely due to the influence of its Commander. He had complete confidence in them — as they had in him. He had developed in his Division a very high standard of fighting efficiency.

The Brigade Commander also took advantage of the parade to thank all ranks for their good work. He wished everyone the best of luck and he too hoped to see us all again in our native city.

Back in camp, education classes were started, and Lieutenant H. L. Graham — who had already given a lecture on 'The Process of Demobilization' — gave a lecture in the Y.M.C.A. on 'The Army of Occupation'.

The first allotments for demobilization had come through on the 10th December, and by now the process of demobilization was proceeding rapidly.

A letter was received from an officer who had recently crossed the Channel:

'There were no men amongst those crossing to touch the Glasgow Highlanders. They were the only ones to land at Southampton shaved and polished as if for parade, and during the time of waiting they were the life of the party and got a dance started, in fact they kept the ball rolling all the time.'

A draft of 179 other ranks and 10 officers from the 6th H.L.I. arrived as reinforcements, and were officially welcomed next day by the Commanding Officer.

Dieppe had not yet regained its usual gaiety, and the hotels which had been closed during the war had not so far reopened. Not having the opportunity of spending much during the previous six months, the officers were in funds and decided to organize a dance. The proprietor of the Bains Chaud., Dieppe, was persuaded to open up, and the Ballroom Suite was booked for Wednesday 26th February. The British Consul was then asked to supply us with a list of forty or fifty of the leading citizens and these, with their wives and daughters, were duly invited. Most of them accepted.

The dance was a brilliant success. The guests included the Port Commandant, the Mayor and Mayoress and their three daughters, the British and American Consuls and many other well-known people. Representatives from the Q.M.A.A.C., V.A.D. and Y.M.C.A., also Base H.Q., Division, Brigade, and all the units in the area were present. The band of the 101st Field Ambulance, kindly lent us by permission of Colonel Way, provided the music. Much reciprocal hospitality resulted from this event.

Division H.Q. moved to the Le Havre area, and a request was received from there for the services of our Adjutant, Captain F. E. Lewis. Capt. Lewis had served the battalion well. He came to us as R.S.M. from the Scots Guards. A strict disciplinarian and an excellent instructor, much credit for the general state of efficiency of the battalion on mobilization was due to him — and for the rebuilding of the battalion at St. Omer after our strength had been allowed to go so low during 1915. His duties were taken over by

Lieut. H. L. Graham.

We spent ten weeks in Dieppe, and a very pleasant time it was for all; while here the bulk of the men were demobilized. On the 12th March a draft of 5 officers and 143 other ranks arrived from the 5th H.L.I.

From Dieppe the battalion was sent by rail to Deauville in Calvados, where Colonel Menzies took over as Commandant of the Trouville Hospital Centre from Major General Sir Samuel Hickson, R.A.M.C. Base H.Q. was pleasantly situated on the Plage at Trouville and the main camp on the high ground overlooking Deauville. This camp had originally been constructed for British convalescents during the intensive U-Boat menace; it was excellent, of a semi-permanent nature and consisted of three general hospitals with good hutment accommodation for the reception of convalescent prisoners of war.

The various compounds, each holding about 5,000 men, were in charge of P.O.W. Companies composed mainly of low category men. Prisoners were escaping at the rate of thirty to forty per week. Our chief tasks were to stop these escapes, and to close down the Base as quickly as possible. With the battalion reduced to about 350, it was obviously not possible for us to supply all the necessary guards, but the problem solved itself quite quickly, and in a quite unexpected way.

One of the compounds contained only Warrant Officers and senior N.C.O's, so Colonel Menzies had about a dozen of their leaders who could speak English brought before him, he reminded them that although the fighting had ended, they were still prisoners of war, and as such liable to be shot at attempting to escape. They must be aware that their present guards were low category men, but he had brought a battalion with four years' front-line experience, and they would mount guard that night.

Another attempt at escape was made, and a man was shot. Next morning the same party was paraded and told that while the incident was much regretted, it was hoped it would be salutary warning to others. One of the Germans then stepped forward and asked if he might speak, he explained that while he and his comrades appreciated what had been said to them the previous evening, they were helpless; by Camp Standing Orders they had to be in their huts by 'Lights Out' and the escapes always took place after that hour. Asked if he thought it would reduce the number of escapes if they were permitted to organize night patrols within their compounds, he was confident it would greatly reduce, if not in fact, stop them.

There was no provision in 'King's Regulations' for prisoners of war guarding themselves, but it sounded an attractive idea. The Commandant approved, but did not deem it necessary to seek the approval of higher authority. The Germans therefore patrolled inside their compound, while the P.O.W. Companies continued to do duty outside — which allowed the Glasgow Highlanders' guard duties to be reduced to a minimum everyone was happy.

Apart from the guards and escorts to be provided, all available men were under Platoon Commanders for three hours each weekday, Lines and outbuildings were inspected by the Commanding Officer each Saturday morning, and a divine service held on Sunday.

The plight of the Germans touched at least one Highlander; Private T. J. Millar was in the habit of giving them cigarettes. When his turn came, just before leaving for home he handed over some apples and other things; moved by the awareness that his release was imminent, theirs not in sight.

There were in the area eighteen units of various branches of the services, with about a hundred officers, including our own. A sports meeting was organized open to all, and well advertised. It took place on the 9th June and was very successful; a large number of local inhabitants attended. The people of Deauville were extremely kind, offering hospitality; and one of the leading hotels — the 'Hotel Splendide' — made a special point of catering for British officers at reasonable prices.

We were invited to send our Colours to be carried in the Victory Parade in Paris on July 14th, and a Colour Party consisting of Lieuts, Robertson and Nicholson, with C.S.M. Mathie and Serpts. Mathieson and Moore duly carried out this duty.

The season at Deauville is very short, and very expensive. Racing takes place three or four days each week, and polo is played on the others. There is also the Plage and the Casino, and the Opera in the evening — altogether a delightful place to be paid to live in. Comte Le Marois, President of the Courses, gave Colonel Menzies a complimentary pass for the race course and polo, and invited him to make use of his boxes at the Course and the Opera. He also provided several transferable passes for the use of the other officers.

One day Colonel Menzies learned that the Prime Minister and several colleagues, together with

Lord Allenby, were staying only a few miles away.

The C.O. and his officers conceived the idea of inviting this distinguished party to the Regimental Mess on Tuesday 15th. That evening Mr. Lloyd George, accompanied by Field-Marshal Lord Allenby, Andrew Bonar Law, Sir Auckland Geddes and Sir Robert Horne dined with the Regiment. Lloyd George and his party showed great interest in the war record of the battalion, particularly its notable stand at Neuve Eglise the previous year. An eightsome reel danced by the younger officers impressed them even more.

Mr. Bonar Law and Sir Robert Horne were sitting members for Glasgow Central and Hillhead constituencies respectively, while two of Sir Robert's nephews had served with the battalion; one from the beginning of the war to the end and having been awarded the DSO. Both had won the MC.

The guests were equally interested in the family record of their chief host of the evening, Lieut.—Col. A. H. Menzies, DSO, who had succeeded his brother in command of the battalion, and, whose father had taken a prominent part in the raising of the original Glasgow Volunteers fifty years before.

Demobilization of the Glasgow Highlanders as a whole was dependent on the repatriation of the prisoners of war. They could have gone at any time, but such was the French hatred of the Hun that they would not provide transport, either rail or road, British H.Q., always hopeful of getting it, would not agree to their being marched home until late in September, just before winter weather would make it impossible. Commencing on 28th, 1,000 P.O.W's left Deauville daily until all but a few badly wounded had gone. The camp was then closed, and we departed for home.



The Glasgow Highlanders returned to Scotland on 27th October, 1919. Three days later the detachment assembled at Charing Cross with the Colours and the pipe band, before marching to the City Chambers where they were 'entertained to luncheon' by the Corporation of Glasgow, All surviving officers who had served with the battalion at any time were present.

A reunion dance, organized by the Regimental Club, was held in St. Andrew's Hall on the night of 4th November — the fifth anniversary of the date the Regiment left for France. About 350 couples took part, and both Colonel C. C. Murray and Colonel A. H. Menzies attended.

That was on the Tuesday. On Saturday the Lord Provost appealed to the citizens of Glasgow to observe two minutes of silence at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, to mark the first anniversary of the ending of hostilities "...not only as a tribute to the heroic dead, who have given their lives for us, but as a heartfelt expression of sympathy with the sufferings of the maimed. and the bereaved," In this connection the Glasgow Highlanders had contributed: 1,257 killed or died of wounds, 1,753 wounded, 165 missing, 54 wounded and missing; a total of 5,229,

Tuesday 11th November 1919: the bells of Glasgow Cathedral, the University and the Cross Steeple toll. At 10.55 a.m. all the tramway cars put on their lights. Moments later sirens in the harbour and in public works sound until one minute to eleven. At the hour works' whistles blow, and in engineering shops all machinery and equipment stops. In the shipyards the rivetting and hammering ceases abruptly. At the harbour, every crane and hoist and capstan comes to a halt, every ship dips the ensign.

In the streets of Glasgow the tramcars' lights go out, and the vehicles themselves roll to a stop. At street crossings police constables hold up all traffic; above, office windows crowded with girls and young men peering down on a silent, motionless city. In the Law Courts sheriffs rise from their benches, officials from their seats, and stand with heads bowed. In the Ordinary Court, Sheriff Fyfe needs no reminding of the significance of the occasion.

'The tension of two minutes' silence brings forth tears from women in unrelieved black, and barely-suppressed giggles from young girls. Many men of mature years bare their heads, while a few youths refuse to be impressed by any ceremony, however poignant.

At two minutes past eleven industrial whistles blow, work is at once resumed, and. the city's roar swells again as Glasgow goes about its business.

The future of the Territorial Force remained in doubt; for a while there seemed to be no prospect of another's being raised. When the decision to reform the Territorial battalions was eventually made, there was still an absence of details regarding units and other essential matters, so Major T. A. Harvie

Anderson — Secretary of the Glasgow Territorial Force Association — went to London to interview the authorities there.

Monday 16th February 1920 was the day announced for the resumption of recruiting for the revived Territorial Army, but in, Glasgow no immediate start could be made. With the exception of the 8th, all the Highland Light Infantry Territorial battalions were reformed, the 9th under command of Lieutenant Colonel A. H. Menzies, DSO.

For the next few months recruiting to the Glasgow Highlanders was slow, but better than most,

Appendix A

THE AUTHOR

Alexander Kirkwood Reid was born in Glasgow on 18th July, 1884, and was educated at Kelvinside Academy. He became a Member of the Glasgow Stock Exchange on 12th September, 1911.

In 1906 he had joined the 5th (Glasgow Highland) Volunteer Battalion, H.L.I., as a Second-Lieutenant, and when the Glasgow Highlanders were mobilized in August 1914 he was a junior company commander, Capt. Reid, H.L.I., was awarded the Military Cross in the King's Birthday Honours of 22nd June, 1915, and exactly one year later was wounded by shrapnel.

On recovery he was posted second-in-command of the 2/9th Bn. H.L.I. which since March 1916 had been stationed at Maldon in Essex as part of the 65th Division, Southern Army Home Forces.

In 1917 Major Reid married Ina Doris Law, the daughter of a Glasgow shipowner.

Early in 1917 the second-line Glasgow Highlanders had moved to Ireland, eventually ending up at Dublin. By the end of that year, however, it had been decided to break up the 65th Division, and with it the 2/9th H.L.I. 'Sandy' Reid. was posted to the 1/9th, and rejoined the first-line battalion in the Ypres Canal support line sector on 19th July, 1918.

From November 1918 to January 1919 he was in temporary command of the battalion. On the 11th February 1919 he was demobilized, and in the King's Birthday Honours of 3rd June, 1919, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. At about the same time he qualified for the Territorial Decoration — war service being counted as double.

When the Territorial Army was revived in 1920, he again became second-in-command of the Glasgow Highlanders under Lieutenant Colonel A. H. Menzies, DSO, until 1923, when he became Commanding Officer.

Lieutenant Colonel Reid commanded the Highlanders until 1929, thereafter becoming a military member of the Territorial Army & Air Force Association of the County of the City of Glasgow, with the rank of full Colonel. In 1933 he was appointed Companion of the Order of the Bath; the GB of the Military Division being conferred only on, in the case of the Army, officers above the rank of Major who have been mentioned in despatches, which in Reid's case he had been — twice.

Since 1920 he and Colonel Menzies had been in partnership as Reid & Menzies, Stockbrokers, with an office at 86, St. Vincent Street, in Glasgow. Colonel Reid was Chairman of the Glasgow Stock Exchange for the year 1936 — 1937, and paid for the reconstruction of the luncheon room in the Exchange.

The partnership with Alexander Henry Menzies was dissolved on 14th March, 1955, so during the war that began the following year, Colonel Reid's business affairs were looked after by the firm of Service Brothers & Fraser. From 1939 until 1946 he was Vice-Chairman of the Territorial Army & Air Force Association and a Deputy Lieutenant of the County of the City of Glasgow. He was also Honorary Organizer, Home Guard, Glasgow Area, and a military member of the Glasgow University Joint Recruiting Board. In 1945 he was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

Colonel A. K. Reid, CB, CBE, DSO, MC, TD, DL, died at 5, Huntly Gardens, Glasgow, on 22nd March, 1948. He was survived by his wife, three daughters and a son.

Appendix B

THE TEXT

From the scanty evidence available, it would appear that Colonel Reid wrote his account of the Glasgow Highlanders between the years 1930 and 1936. That is to say, after he had ceased to command the battalion, and before he became Chairman of the Glasgow Stock Exchange. While he worked on his project, he had access to a copy of the Battalion War Diary; probably the one sent month by month to the T.F. Record Office, Hamilton, by No. 1 Sub-Section, GHQ Record Office.

Colonel Reid's personal experiences in the first line battalion did not cover the period from 22nd June, 1916, to 19th July, 1918, but his business partner's first-hand knowledge would also have been available. Thus the gap would have been reduced to the interval 15th July, 1916, to 14th October, 1917 — precisely the period under the command of Colonel John Menzies, his partner's brother. One way or another, the result is 'an accurate record, with the critical parts scrutinized and corrected by officers who had a close knowledge of the particular events.'

There is nothing to suggest that Colonel Reid did any work on his history after the outbreak of the 1939 — 1945 War, and it is even possible that the text in his lifetime consisted of a manuscript, with some quotations from published sources interleaved, sometimes without connecting passages.

After the death of Colonel Reid, the unfinished work was handed over to 'Colonel George MacKellar'. If this was Lieutenant Colonel J.G. MacKellar, DSO, OBE, who was Secretary to the TA & AF Association, Glasgow, from 1947 to 1958, then he had personal experience of the Great War, but not it seems, with the Glasgow Highlanders.

It is possible that Colonel MacKellar first had the text typed, without any initial correction or revision. Colonel MacKellar's contribution seems to have been the addition of marginal notes inspired by the content of the adjacent text, and as far as can now be seen, these were of a general nature only. All these pencilled notes have later been erased, and with the exception of a few words which may just be made out with the naked eye, are new beyond the recall of even the latest forensic equipment.

In due course the history — now referred to as 'written by Colonel George MacKellar., based upon Colonel Sandy Reid's story' — was passed on to Colonel Thomas G. Robinson, OBE.,TD. Colonel Robinson was a Glasgow Highlander but of 2nd World War vintage. In June, 1971, referring to the history, Colonel Robinson wrote, '...my task is to revise it,...correct phraseology and to check matters of detail.'

In 1984 a chance remark disclosed the fact that the existence of a history of the Glasgow Highlanders was not known to anyone at Headquarters of the Royal Highland Fusiliers, successors to the Highland. Light Infantry. In the meantime, Colonel Robinson had died, and so it transpired, had his widow. Eventually in September 1985, one of Colonel Robinson's sons, Robert, — also an ex-Glasgow Highlander — was located, and he produced the original typescript, and some other papers. He was also able to confirm that his father completed his task some years previously, and that a copy of the retyped text had been deposited with Regional Archives on the 4th August 1975. Along with a number of other items relating to one or other of the two world wars, this is to be found under reference TD 366. The work of the latest editor has been quite straightforward, and consisted of:

- 1) Checking dates against the War Diary, and proper names against relevant sources; also correcting a few errors in typing.
- 2) Deleting quotations from published works.
- 3) Deleting a few paragraphs, mostly of criticism of Prime Minister Lloyd George, which tended to distract the reader from the real narrative.
- 4) Extracting phrases derived from hindsight, and repositioning them as footnotes.
- 5) Adding a few extra footnotes; some stemming from items of interest in the War Diary.
- 6) Sub-dividing four exceptionally long chapters; now Nos. 3 and 4, 16 and 17, 18 and 19, 24 and 25, and renumbering others to suit.
- 7) Rewriting the last chapter. This as received., seemed to be an unsatisfactory ending to the book

— for various reasons. Originally, Colonel Reid's account seems to have ended with what is now Chapter 25; the next one being added later. It was obviously written without the benefit of the War Diary, contained a number of mistakes, and leaned heavily towards the social side of the Officers' Mess. It cannot have been written by Reid, since its last phrase 'we departed for home (page 369) refers to an event which took place seven months after his return to civilian life. This chapter has accordingly been rewritten, using as much of the original text as practicable; and extended to bring the story forward to 1920 and the revival of the Territorials.

8) Retyping the text on A5-size paper.

9) Adding photographs, maps and appendices; also the prefaces, which are based on papers received from Colonel Robinson's son.

The latest editor has striven to stay close to the spirit of Colonel Reid's vision; improving — hopefully — without changing the essential message that 'the Glasgow Highlanders were a battalion with a strong esprit de corps and therefore with high standards in every way. These were never lost, and indeed through all its history were strongly maintained.'

The two surviving children of Colonel Reid, Alison Easton and Patricia Bridges, have given their approval to this edition of their father's work.